Challenging the Dominant Discourse of ‘Welfare Dependency’:
A Multi-Episode Survival Analysis of Ontario Works Spells

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the dominant discourse of welfare dependency and its implications for lone mothers in Ontario, Canada. This hegemonic discourse has been instrumental in positioning lone mothers as deviant, pathologically flawed and ineffective citizens. Using a repeated survival analysis, I examine the spells of participants identifying the significant variables influencing social assistance exit rates. Social constructionism and critical feminism are the theoretical lenses underpinning the analysis. The quantitative study examines the current composition of the Ontario Works caseload, interrogates the legitimacy of the welfare dependency supposition, debunks numerous social constructions surrounding welfare receipt and highlights the barriers impeding participants. The study culminates with a new understanding to counter the welfare dependency paradigm, recognizing the overlooked provisioning work of women in the neoliberal post welfare state.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation grapples with the dominant discourse of welfare dependency, particularly as it bears upon lone mothers in Ontario, Canada. This discourse will be unpacked to reveal the social constructions which position lone mothers as ineffective citizens (Lister, 2003), deviant (Chunn & Gavigan, 2004) and dependent (Antel, 1992; Moffitt, 1992; McLanahan, 1988). In order to understand the ever changing nature of the state in the post-war era, the exclusion of specific groups in society and women’s multifarious roles in society, literature bases particularly salient to current understandings of citizenship will be explored. While feminist research recognizes the gendered nature of the post-welfare state, mainstream literature continues to discount gender as a fundamental construct of citizenship (Gazso, 2009a; Herd & Harrington-Meyer, 2002; Lister, 2003; Orloff, 1993; Skevik, 2005). Hence, new analytic frameworks must be explored to understand the changing effects of state provisions on gender relations (Brush, 2002; Sainsbury, 1996). Key, too, in this deliberation are the societal structures framing dominant discourses which perpetually classify individuals on a spectrum of desirability.

1.1 Study Rationale

My interest in this analysis, and hence the study rationale, has its genesis in my Master of Social Work’s thesis on the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program of Ontario Works (OW) (Smith-Carrier, 2004, 2010). In this research, only two teenage mothers of a sample of 26 were raised in homes with parent(s) who accessed social assistance (SA). The dearth of individuals in the study following the intergenerational ‘welfare dependency’ hypothesis prompted me to question the dependency assumption and its veracity for depicting individuals accessing SA today. Hence, the dissertation empirically explores the validity of welfare dependency from a life course perspective and seeks to understand the challenges and social constructions confronting mothers accessing SA in the post-welfare state. More importantly, this research elucidates how society constructs particular groups (in this study, the targeted group was lone mothers) as
inadequate citizens, excluding them from the benefits of ordinary citizenry in society. This research takes place in the province of Ontario via the analysis of Ontario Works caseload data.

Using repeated Cox Proportional Hazards (PH) regression models, I interrogate what variables are significant in predicting participants’ exits from SA. The covariates in the analysis include a number of different characteristics of participants’ social locations that have been shown to play a role in SA usage; for example, gender, age, family structure, education and immigration status (i.e. foreign born or Canadian born). Canadian studies, similar to the study at hand, have found that SA receipt tends to be cyclical and episodic (e.g. Barrett & Cragg, 1998; Cooke, 2009; Stewart & Dooley, 1999) rather than long term in nature. Hence the veracity of the dominant discourse of ‘welfare dependency’ is problematic given that participants are not generally prone to lengthy, ‘dependent’ stays on SA.

Social constructions of SA ‘users’ offered in the literature are also seriously flawed and do not adequately represent SA participants. Through the statistical model and an examination of a snapshot of demographic data from one month in 2009, I debunk many of the existing claims regarding who participants are and why they are compelled to access SA. Constructions of poor, teenage, (Black) ‘girls’ using drugs in the US are hardly representative of the Ontario context. Mainstream (predominantly American) SA literature has focused on the shortcomings of individuals, adhering to conceptions of the normative neoliberal citizen, thereby disregarding fundamental systemic barriers which hinder participants’ ability to leave a life of poverty. The contribution of this study thus refutes the extant scholarship that would blame individuals for accessing SA, focusing instead on the range of barriers which impede participants from exiting the system. Focusing on why participants cycle through the system remains key.

The dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter One offers a brief introduction to the study; the rationale for pursuing this analysis and provides the organization of the dissertation. Chapter Two examines the theoretical frameworks undergirding the study: the social constructivist and critical feminist lenses. As the nature of citizenship has been widely debated from antiquity, Chapter Three explores select bodies of literature which specifically illuminate the nature of lone mothers’ construction as citizens. This review includes examination of the following literature bases: the classical liberal framework, social capital, the new social
movements’ literature, provisioning, social exclusion/inclusion and feminist citizenship. An empirical review of the literature is also included; describing prior studies conducted in this research area, many of which espouse the social construction of welfare dependency. Chapter Four details the study’s methodology and data design, followed by a discussion of the considerations undergirding the quantitative study. Chapter Five presents the analysis or study findings. Part I supplies a discussion on the composition of the Ontario Works caseload, followed by Part II offering the findings from the repeated Cox PH statistical modeling. Finally, Chapter Six presents the rationale for why welfare dependency is not an accurate or appropriate paradigm to depict SA participants today. Concluding thoughts and avenues for future research are also provided.
CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Perspectives

Prior to delving into a review of the literature bases pertinent to the study at hand, it is imperative to set the stage, defining first the theoretical frameworks underpinning the research. Social constructionist theorists believe that knowledge is a matter of representation: representations that do not mirror an independently existing reality, but are social constructions. This theoretical framework is fitting for understanding how myriad constructions of dependents and dependency have been manufactured and reproduced in society. This study also adopts a critical feminist framework whereby structural explanations are given for the causes of social problems, rather than individual failings. The common problems faced by mothers accessing the social assistance system are therefore identified as enmeshed within the systems and structures which maintain their continued oppression.

2.1 Social Constructionism & the Construction of ‘Dependency’

The last thing people living in poverty want is to be seen and treated as different or other as they are in dominant discourses of poverty, reinforced by media representations (Lister, 2007, p. 53).

Social constructionism reflects “…the view that knowledge, standards of evidence and methodologies are ‘of our own making’ rather than pieces passively discovered and added incrementally to a unique, true theory of nature and that these are constructed in the contexts of our various projects and practices and evolve in response to the latter and experience” (Nelson, 1993, as cited in Tuana, 2001, p. 227). Tanesini (1999) describes Sandra Harding’s account of knowledge as being a matter of representation: representations that do not mirror an independently existing reality, but are social constructions. These oft distorted and blemished mirrors of reality are created within cultural, historical and local contexts via the interpretation of the language used to describe them (Payne, 2005).
The thinking surrounding specific social constructions of the ‘welfare dependent’ (Misra, Moller & Karides, 2003) becomes internalized by individuals in society (Mickelson & Williams, 2008), including SA participants themselves (Pollack & Caragata, 2010). The subjectivities surrounding social constructions commonly include defects in the personality of the individual, traits which are deemed to be dangerous and must be resolutely expunged. Consequently, the notion of dependency kindles strong visual and emotional responses, implicating the individual, rather than the systemic nature of problems (Bacchi, 1999; Misra, Moller & Karides, 2003); the moral and psychological, rather than the economic (Fraser & Gordon, 1994).

Fraser and Gordon (1994) trace the genealogy of the ideological term ‘dependency’, recognizing that the constructions surrounding welfare receipt are distinctly racialized and gendered. Where dependency was once considered culturally appropriate and right in a heteronormative context for (white) mothers of young children (Misra, Moller & Karides, 2003), the term has become pejorative; labelling that evokes stigmatization and marginalization. Orloff (2002) asserts that the androcentric welfare reform measures of the 1990s were aimed at vilifying the program and construing any sort of dependency as pathological. A personality disorder, Dependent Personality Disorder, has even been created in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition ([DSM-IV], American Psychiatric Association, 1994) to typify inadequate dependents, a diagnosis most frequently given to females (Orloff, 2002).

The roots underlying these constructions lie in core beliefs about the causes of poverty and the ideologies and historical legacies of SA (Seccombe, James & Walters, 1998), which have shifted with the time but relentlessly divide the ‘deserving’ from ‘undeserving’ (Piven & Cloward, 1971). Mothers accessing SA have been ranked on a hierarchy of deservedness (Caragata, 2009; Little, 1994) in which they must continuously convince society that they, ‘manless women,’ are worthy of receiving financial aid (Secommb et al., 1998). Continuously suspect for needing financial assistance, the intersections of poverty, welfare and crime overlap. In response, government leaders have invoked constant surveillance to detect moral feebleness and prevent any intimation of deception or fraud (Chunn & Gavigan, 2004). Analogous to common criminals, the ‘welfare mom’ has thus been subject to moral regulation and social control (Little, 1994).
Gring-Pemble (2003) points to a number of significant demonstrations of how the social constructions of the ‘welfare dependent’ have become entrenched in American policy. Numerous societal labels are now attached to welfare ‘users’, including (but by no means limited to): the misfortunate; the immoral and criminal (i.e. fraudulent and drug addict); the feckless; the young and uneducated; the abusive and neglectful parent; irresponsible; lazy, unmotivated and free riders of the system willing to have any number of children in order to receive more money. Appendix 1 provides a visual representation of social constructions surrounding SA participants.

To illustrate these constructions, Gring-Pemble (2003) highlights the establishment of the multifarious social services and charitable organizations erected during the reform measures of the 1990s with the introduction of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in the United States that were created to address the rising perception of poverty as fundamentally rooted in poor morals and values. This ideology has been characterized by the constructions ‘immoral’ and ‘criminal’. Similarly, the ‘unskilled’ and ‘feckless’ labels are exposed in workfare systems’ predilection to support programs focused on job-readiness as opposed to skills training. As such, the PRWORA emphasizes job search activities (i.e. resume writing workshops) over training in career skill sets and apprenticeships, a product of the notion that welfare dependents do not inherently possess the abilities necessary to acquire the knowledge and skills that lead to gainful employment. Furthermore, the construction of participants as substance ‘abusers’ is clearly revealed in the PRWORA’s condition of testing negative for controlled substances in order to receive SA provisions, entitled, “Sanctioning for Testing Positive for Controlled Substances” (PRWORA of 1996, 2141, 2278, as cited in Gring-Pemble, 2003).

Moreover, the ‘neglectful and abusive parent’ constructions are addressed in the PRWORA’s establishment of plans that set

...(F)orth the obligations of the individual, which may include a requirement that the individual attend school, maintain certain grades and attendance, keep school age children of the individual in school, immunize children, attend parenting and money management classes, or do other things that will help the individual become and remain employed in the private sector (PRWORA of 1996, 2127, 2128, as cited in Gring-Pemble, 2003).
The conditions that the ‘welfare dependent’ maintain full time school attendance, while engaging in parenting and financial management classes, establishes that SA participants do not innately possess the ability to manage their own finances, are not fit parents, and must be coerced to complete their education (Gring-Pemble, 2003).

The construction of ‘dead beat dads’ is also poignant in exposing the gendered and heteronormative ideological underpinnings of SA. In the event that child support payments can be garnered from the father, the onus is placed on the mother to assist in the pursuit of funds (upon threat of the reduction or elimination of SA) if she does not provide welfare administrators with paternity identification and child-support enforcement assistance. Since the focus has been set on mothers as the formidable target, consideration of fathers is markedly absent from discussions, including males’ absolution in the fathering process, his sexual habits, marital status, and reproductive choices (Gring-Pemble, 2003). Silverstein (1996) notes the preclusion of men in the welfare discourse due to a limited definition of fathering confined strictly to the breadwinner role. If the responsibility of fathers was conceived to be equal vis-à-vis mothers, expressed as a caretaking role for their child/ren, then their responsibility “would be defined independently to their relationships to the mothers…parental responsibility would include paternal responsibility as well” (Silverstein, 1996, p. 6). However, seldom is the caretaking role of the father taken into account. For example, men are not required to attend mandatory parental classes, as is the case for teenage mothers accessing SA (Smith-Carrier, 2004). Moreover, whereas women’s inadequacies in motherhood have been debated exhaustively, discussions about men’s skills in parenting, financial management, and more importantly, reasons for requiring SA, are rarely in question.

Clearly, the explanations for welfare dependency are fundamentally entrenched in beliefs about the generation of poverty and wealth. Rooted in Social Darwinism (Crandall, 2000), all competent ‘able bodied persons’ are perceived to have the same ability to obtain skills and education, the same life opportunities, and an equal amount of human capital necessary for economic mobility. Secommbe, James and Walters (1998) write that “the perspective of rugged individualism suggests that people, themselves, are primarily responsible for their own economic position in society and that opportunities are available for all who are willing to work hard and who have motivation and initiative” (p. 850-851). Unequivocally, however, individuals do not
present equal skills, education, human capital, and are not independent of the structural forces at play around them.

2.2 **Critical Feminism**

According to Breitkreuz (2005), critical feminism is a fusion of both critical theory and feminist theory. Critical theory assumes that problems are not reducible to simple explanations, and therefore, uses research to reveal embedded meanings in culture and society. Critical theory is based on the assumption that “all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted… (and) certain groups in society are privileged over others” (Laasko & Drevdahl, 2006, p. 87). This recognition requires an analysis which critically examines social institutions to elucidate structures of domination and oppression (Fay, 1987).

Feminist theorists see women’s experiences as legitimate and essential sources of knowledge, recognizing their identity has been oppressed in a patriarchal and male dominated society (Luke & Gore, 1992). The blend of the two theories allows researchers to centre their analyses on the knowledge of women from a personal perspective in order to unveil the intricacies of women’s day to day experiences (Weiler, 1988), whilst illuminating the connections between the private and public spheres. Hence, critical feminist theory endeavours to “reveal structural oppression, transform systems, and emancipate oppressed individuals, using gender as a key category of analysis” (Breitkreuz, 2005, p. 149). Structural explanations of social problems are thus accentuated (Bloom, 1998), as is the understanding of women’s oppression from accounts of personal experiences (Laakso & Drevdahl, 2006) in the production and perpetuation of common societal contexts (Bloom, 1998). The common problems taken up in the personal experiences of mothers accessing the welfare system are therefore recognized as embedded within the systems and structures which perpetually reinforce their oppression (Bacchi, 1999). At the same time, these structures may be considered both cause (reproducing discourse and ideology in the policy landscape) and effect (as products of the discourses which continually shape them). These theoretical frameworks are imperative as we question our “definitions of dependence and independence in order to allow new, emancipatory social visions to emerge” (Fraser & Gordon, 1994, p. 332).
2.3 Epistemological Considerations

From the constructivist epistemological position (discussed in detail later in the chapter) stemmed social constructionism, a paradigm fleshed out by Berger and Luckman (1966), referring to an epistemological position positing that “everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men (sic) and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world” (p. 33). Burr (1995) argues that the social constructivist stance permits the researcher to take a critical stance towards understandings of the social world. Engendered by a constructive suspicion of how the world appears, the researcher is able to remain attentive to the ways social processes fabricate and sustain sanctioned descriptions of knowledge. Accordingly, the researcher ought to continually scrutinize the set of meanings, representations, narratives, metaphors and stories which express manufactured and predetermined versions of reality. As such, the “discourses that form our identity are intimately tied to the structures and practices that are lived out in society from day to day, and it is in the interest of the relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of ‘truth’” (Burr, 1995, p. 55).

In the same way, Fuller (2007) argues that the social constructivist is concerned with how knowledge is produced and the ways in which knowledge carries authority throughout society, particularly among those not involved in the knowledge production process. As “a great deal (or all) of our lived experience; and of the world we inhabit is to be conceived of as socially constructed” (Hacking, 1999, p. 6), one significant use of social constructivism is to raise consciousness. If social reality is constituted discursively, then reality can be replaced to transform social life (Hibberd, 2005, p. 25). Hence, awareness and understanding of how social constructions are employed, allows the researcher to advance alternate versions of reality that are useful to those not involved in the knowledge production process. As Burr (1995) argues, “The agency of human beings lies in their ability to manipulate discourse and use it for their own ends” (p. 92).

Epistemological debates, also termed paradigm wars, have endured for years. The constructivist approach was conceived in response to the prevailing positivist perspective, the dominant epistemology for generations. Occupying opposite ends of the epistemological spectrum, positivism and constructivism remain at odds to this day. Positivism (and later post-
positivism, a tempered form of the approach) espouses the belief that reality exists external to the individual and that knowledge is objective and unbiased. In juxtaposition, constructivism views reality as discursively constituted, intersubjective, given expression via language (Hibberd, 2005). Today the differences between these stances appear much more subtle than earlier in history when researchers deemed a bridge between the two was entirely untenable.

Given that the theoretical and epistemological foundations of critical feminism and social constructivism in this study appear incongruent with the empirical methodological approach, the following caveat is in order. Researchers from purist positions would argue that it is impossible to generate research emanating from opposing epistemological positions, referred to by Lincoln and Guba (2000) as paradigm incommensurability (as cited in Greene, 2007). The authors argue that since methods from the quantitative and qualitative research streams are situated on different and irreconcilable epistemological frames, mixed methodologies in research are not viable. Greene (2007), however, asserts that researchers must jettison the binaries of objective post-positivism and subjective constructivism, and respect the multiplicity of paradigms used to describe the world. Likewise, Kuhn (1970) perceived that competing paradigms may exist simultaneously (as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In the literature on mixed methodologies, the term pragmatism is used to refer to researchers adopting methods from divergent epistemological traditions. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) argue that the pragmatist may arrive at epistemological compatibility via directing her/his focus on the research questions of the study, rather than the worldview underlying the method(s) harnessed. In this way, a détente is declared on the paradigm wars and the researcher may proceed with her/his work (Smith, 1994, as cited in Taskakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

For this study, it was imperative to find a means of bridging the epistemological divide, to find a way through the objective-subjective, real-constructed dichotomy. In this regard, Gergen (1998) makes a compelling argument. Oft it appears that the social constructivist approach at its philosophical endpoint may lead to futility, rendering it untenable as a conduit for social change. Indeed, Gergen (1998) reveals that “those engaged in social change began to find that the constructionist axe turned back to gash the hand of the user. There was no power, structure, race and gender oppression, poverty and so on that was not itself constructed” (Gergen,

By viewing both realism and constructionism as forms of discourse (forms of speaking and writing) and as cultural resources, they become intelligible concomitantly to researchers on both sides. As such, discourses from either vantage point gains intelligibility by virtue of their opposition from the other, with language occupying the vehicle for relating, albeit not the foundation for one’s epistemological view of ‘reality’. Developing a dual familiarity allows protagonists (of either episteme) to find some discourses on either side that are beneficial for opposing particular injustices. Discourses of realism or constructivism then can be understood as available to all, to be adopted for situated purposes (Gergen, 1998). Rather than adopting an antagonistic stance, discourses viewed as cultural resources can be compared to other forms expressed through style, i.e. art or architecture, where the viewer does not set one style against another but is able to find different ways to converse about the object under study.

Gergen (1998) highlights how taking a non-confrontational approach is essential in exploring how commonalities from different epistemological paradigms might be expressed. First, the separation of speaker from speech, or identity from discourse, is imperative. This separation creates an open space for recognizing the person as distinct from the discourses shaping the individual. Accordingly, racial epithets, for example, can be understood and shared by researchers from both perspectives. Facilitated by the acceptance of polyphonies (multiple and competing discourses), Gergen (1998) calls for inter-interpolation; an analysis of discourse fragments from both realist and constructivist registers in order to “generate a vision of future potentials” (Gergen, 1998, p. 155). Gergen provides some examples of how both realists and constructionists can explore commonality in order to rally together and achieve social change, i.e. domestic violence, bomb attempts, etc. Putting aside transcendental beliefs about the world, there becomes no realist or constructivist per se, only cultural participants able to take up different discourses (polyphonies) to approach common social ailments. For at the end of the day, “we must put aside our attention to philosophy and its assumptions in order to get our work done” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, as cited in Greene, 2007, p. 53).
The epistemological discussion here provides an anchor for seeing how knowledge becomes constructed and is reproduced. The concept of welfare dependency for example is not readily defined in the literature but is quickly thrown around as if the reader is aware of what the term means, including its undertones and connotations (as will be discussed later, at some times and in some places, dependency evokes positive ascriptions, at other times negative ones). By interrogating the discourse of welfare dependency from both a social constructivist register (examining the social constructions surrounding SA usage) and a realist register (a quantitative methodology), I am able achieve inter- interpolation, a pursuit which has as its end goal social change (hopefully by challenging some of the negative stereotypes about SA participants). Hence the quantitative study presented does not claim to have complete, objective truth attached to it; rather it provides a ‘cultural resource’ or means of viewing data that allows me to question current understandings surrounding SA receipt.
CHAPTER THREE

A Review of the Literature

This chapter offers a review of select bases of literature that are particularly salient in understanding common constructions surrounding welfare dependency and lone mothers’ contributions as citizens in present society. This review examines the following bodies of scholarship: first, the classical liberal framework is introduced as a backdrop to contemporary understandings of the citizenship debate, as well as an exploration of the historical evolution of the welfare state to post-welfare state and how ‘dependency’ has evolved throughout these eras. Second, the literature on social capital is presented and why the concept is incongruous for lone mothers, followed by an examination of the new social movements’ literature, including discussion on the forms and effects of women-centred community organizing. This body of literature provides a useful segue to provisioning which points to the fissure of the public-private binary and considers new ways in which women’s work can be reframed as valid contributions to citizenship. Next, literature on social exclusion and inclusion is presented, including the ways in which elements of exclusion/inclusion affect women from different social locations, followed by an exploration of research studies adopting the mainstream approach to welfare dependency. Finally, a reflection on feminist citizenship is provided.

3.1 The Classical Liberal Framework

The classical liberal framework is pivotal in understanding the changing nature of the state. The following section examines the arguments put forward in the work by T.H. Marshall (Marshall, 1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) as a backdrop for understanding the classical liberal framework. I do not delve into the many details of this work, as that would necessitate a volume unto itself; rather, the discussion here is purely to provide the framework for recognizing how state provisions impact the lives of women historically to the present.

Associated with citizenship is a wide continuum of rights and obligations for the individual citizen, government and society as a whole. In the liberal political tradition,
originating in the seventeenth century, these rights took the form of limited state guarantees of freedom for the individual sovereign citizen. Staeheli and Clarke (2003) maintain that civil rights were the original focus of citizenship, which was extended to include notions of political rights in the twentieth century, and later expanded to social rights (Lister, 2003).

Thomas Humphrey Marshall, the highly influential British sociologist, introduced a momentous contribution to the discourse on citizenship, positing that social rights be added to political and civil rights to permit the full participation of the citizenry (Marshall, 1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). The seminal work by T.H. Marshall was written in 1950 entitled, Citizenship and Social Class, after giving a series of lectures at Cambridge University in 1949 discussing the contributions of Alfred Marshall’s paper on the working classes (written in 1873). In 1992, the book was reprinted with a complementary essay (Part II) by Tom Bottomore, entitled Citizenship and Social Class, Forty Years On. In his work, Marshall (1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) asserted that citizenship is experienced within membership in a community rather than membership within the state; noting that citizenship is “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 18). As members of the community, citizens were privy to civil, political and social rights, while being subject to a number of key obligations (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

The crux of Marshall’s (1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) argument rests on the notion that a number of central rights or entitlements were to be ensured by the state to its citizens. The first of the entitlements were civil rights, established in the nineteenth century. The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom—liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice…the right to defend and assert all one’s rights on terms of equality with others and by due process of law (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 8). The institution affiliated with civil rights was the court. Second, political rights were conferred to citizens via the franchise, (extended as universal political citizenship in 1918) both as potential members of political office and as voters. The institutions associated with political rights were parliament and councils of local government. Third, social rights were added to the notion of citizenship, gaining momentum in the twentieth century. Marshall (1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore,
1992) raised a number of facets of social rights, but chiefly referred to, “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (p. 8). The institutions aligned with social rights were social services and the educational system. Social rights may comprise a number of different provisions depending on the state, and may include elements such as health insurance, retirement benefits, adequate housing, unemployment benefits and compulsory education (Shafir & Brysk, 2006).

Although recognizing that the system of capitalism may at times compete with the conceptualization of citizenship championed by Marshall, social equality in itself was not considered to be the end goal (Marshall, 1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). The extension of social services was not so much a means of combating income disparities, but rather to ensure “a general enrichment of the concrete substance of civilised life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalisation between the more and the less fortunate at all levels” (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 33). For Marshall and Bottomore (1992), the lessening of social inequalities would inevitably come about as a result of bestowing citizens with essential civil, political and social rights; rather than purposefully attempting to combat poverty and marginalization in society.

While the rights of citizenship were the principal contribution of Marshall’s (1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) argument, he also considered the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. The chief duties of the citizen were: to pay taxes and insurance contributions; participate in education and military service; “to live the life of a good citizen, giving such service as one can to promote the welfare of the community” (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 45); and, of course, the duty to work.

Work in Marshall’s context referred strictly to waged employment and contributions to the labour market (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). The Poor Laws in the nineteenth century delineated who were citizens by virtue of their employment status, as exemplified by the quote,

The Poor Law treated the claims of the poor, not as an integral part of the rights of the citizen, but as an alternative to them—as claims which could be met only if the claimants ceased to be citizens in any true sense of the word. For paupers forfeited in practice the
civil right of personal liberty, by internment in the workhouse, and they forfeited by law any political rights they might possess (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992, p. 15).

The ideology underpinning the British Poor Laws, that of the duty of citizens to participate in paid labour, was carried over into the evolving notions of the welfare state. Welfare provisions were to be provided only temporarily, with stigma attached, while citizens sought gainful employment. Accordingly, Marshall and Bottomore (1992) assert that, “private individuals secure their own welfare by their own efforts, and the role of the state (or of private charity) is limited to providing help to those who, for one reason or another, are unable to help themselves” (p. 70). The established liberal ideology underscores that individuals perceived to rely on charity ought to be restricted from procuring the civil rights (e.g. unable to afford adequate legal representation); political rights (experience political marginalization); and social rights (e.g. restricted access to education, health care, etc.) associated with full citizenship, and therefore, become second-class or an ‘underclass’ of politically, economically and socially marginalized citizens.

As noted, social rights were premised on citizens’ duty to paid work in the labour market. Women were therefore exempt from the status of full citizenship as most women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were wholly obligated to perform the domestic duties of the ‘private sphere’. Marshall (1951; 1981) neglected to consider women’s citizenship rights, as clearly these rights are different for women vis-à-vis men. His conception follows an “overly deterministic class-based analysis that was gender and race neutral” (Gazso, 2009a, p. 45). Hence, Bottomore (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) wrestles with the shortcomings of Marshall’s (1951; 1981) conception of citizenship, particularly in his handling of women. The social rights tangibly made available through social policies of education, health care and the helping professions upon which many of the social services rest, are in large measure positions occupied by women. Hence, the rights attributed by Marshall as substantive aspects of citizenship are situated on a division of labour which presupposes rights provided primarily by women. Consequently, Bottomore (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) asserts that, “any discussion of citizenship today is obliged, therefore, to consider specifically the social position of women—whether they are...‘second-class citizens’—and this poses new questions about the scope and content of social rights” (p. 68). While recognizing that women are inexorably disadvantaged
within the Marshallian understanding of citizenship, little is purposefully considered to counter the structural inequalities mediated by women’s disproportion share of labour in the private sphere. This disadvantage is particularly hard felt by women in the post-welfare state.

3.2 Evolution of Welfare State to Postwelfare State

Fraser and Gordon (1994) reveal that during industrial society dependency was embodied by two distinct icons. First, the ‘pauper’, who was not even considered a subordinate in productive labour, but outside the system altogether. The pauper was wholly dependent on assistance (the church via almsgiving, etc.) (Piven & Cloward, 1971) and was not perceived as contributing to productive economic labour (despite the huge contributions of labour amassed within internship in workhouses). The pauper was therefore not granted citizenship status. Second, the ‘colonial native’ or ‘slave’, characterized by terms such as ‘savage’, ‘childlike’ and ‘submissive’, were used to depict the racist ideology of the dependent. These two icons coexisted with the rise of a new icon, that of ‘housewife’. Whilst the erstwhile dependent pauper became free to evolve into the ‘independent’ (white) workingman, dependency was feminized, and women’s stigmatized status mirrored that of the pauper and slave icons (Fraser & Gordon, 1994).

The multiple social locations (intersections of race, gender, age, ability, etc.) of individuals clearly affected (and continues to affect) citizenship entitlements (Collins, 1998). Full citizenship in industrial society extended exclusively to a particular race, gender and class of citizen. The heterosexual, propertied white male was (and continues to be) the archetype of the citizenship model. Indeed, the citizenship of the independent, privileged male (determined by class) was situated on the labour of those males outside legitimate citizenship (i.e. slaves and paupers) and the work of women. Accordingly, (some) men’s seeming ‘independence’ was never in fact truly independent, but was at all times positioned on the provision of an enduring labour supply from the woman (and children, initially) in his household and the toil of slaves and paupers in economic production (Fraser & Gordon, 1994).

Preceding the World Wars, the social order was thus centred on the family wage. The family wage, a model of most industrial welfare states, relied exclusively upon the salary of the heterosexual male head of the family to provide the economic sustenance of the family (Gazso, 2009b). However, during the Great Depression, the vagaries associated with market capitalism
became more apparent and many were forced to turn to public assistance, albeit with immense feelings of shame and disgrace (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Henceforth, the social insurance system (demarcated an element of ‘Social Security’) was established to protect the male head of the nuclear family from future economic calamity, which government leaders aimed to disconnect from social assistance warranting the dependency status (resulting from their success in present society most would not deem retirement social security payments as dependency) (Fraser & Gordon, 1994).

In Canada, one tier of public assistance was allocated to ‘deserving’ workers (i.e. retirement benefits), while a second tier was erected, providing subsistence level financial aid to women (and families) that did not embody the family wage scenario (i.e. Mother’s Allowance in Ontario, for a detailed examination, see Little, 1998). Once the family wage was no longer tenable however paid employment was deemed the principal responsibility of citizens, regardless of gender (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Consequently as a result of the Social Assistance Reform Act, lone mothers were no longer regarded as ‘deserving’ of family benefits; shifting instead to an ‘undeserving’ status, where work was demanded in return for benefits—assistance purposefully rendered with stigma attached. Accordingly the two tiers established distinctly differentiated deserving/undeserving categories of welfare entitlement, while further solidifying a gendered division of labour as the natural order of life.

3.3 **Dependency in the 20th Century**

Flashback to the era of ‘Leave it to Beaver,’ with June Cleaver, clad with apron in the kitchen, effortlessly preparing dinner for her loving husband and mischievous boys. In the 1950s, (white) women’s dependence on men was heralded as conforming to the ‘natural order,’ amenable to the standard that women’s main life purposes were to raise children and make their men happy. Solinger (1998) contends that not only was dependency viewed as the normative and positive path for women, but women who made independent choices were cast as pathologically flawed and dangerous (i.e. the unwed woman who chose to keep her baby was depicted as suffering from psychosis). The bad ‘choices’ made by women were deemed marks of poor sense, irresponsible behaviour, and pathological or aberrant thinking.
While women’s entrance into the labour force in the 1940s was accepted as necessary to support the war efforts, the end of World War II signified a return to domestic life for women, relegated once again to private sphere activities. By the end of the fifties, however, 39 per cent of married women with school aged children (re)entered the work force. “White mothers at work” (Solinger, 1998, p. 6) became increasingly characteristic of the time, albeit this phenomenon was oft met with ambivalence and hostility. Concern for the ‘aggressive’ working woman, preferring the (perceived) damaging choice to leave her children, was common in the press which still held to the notion that ‘women’s place was in the home’. Concurrently, feminist literature was cultivated which recognized that a woman’s choice to engage in paid labour was not reprehensible. While this literature proposed different positions of the working mother, conservative segments of the population continued to decry the actions of mothers who chose alternatives to the norm. Solinger (1998) notes that “periods of transition are often marked by a resurgence of conservatism that may take the form of aggressive resistance to change” (p. 11).

Notwithstanding, judgments ascribed to women’s choices were not imposed equally across the board. The recognition of difference in social location underlay some of the prescriptive judgments of women’s decisions. While white women were deemed to hold the resources that would engender their ‘independence’ to choose waged labour, women from other racial and ethnic backgrounds were not seen as having choice but were compelled to work outside the home in order to support their families. Indeed until the 1960s women of colour were not even deemed to have the capacity to make the poor choices associated with pathology, at a time when ‘choice’ for most white women in the workforce was beginning to be de-pathologized. Here we see how ideology is complex and embodies particular assumptions about race and gender. The thriving ‘independent’ white woman did not purposefully promote the position of Others without the same opportunities for success, leaving women from other classes, races, sexual orientations and spatial locations mired in the moral regulation and judgments of dependence of the past (Solinger, 1998).

Whilst the 1970s’ women’s and civil rights movements brought some measure of choice to women, the connotation of the ‘welfare mother’ began to take on many of the ascriptions assigned to dependency status. The stigma acquired by making ‘bad choices’, either through divorce or unwed pregnancy, became synonymous with scamming, laziness and a life of frivolity
in the face of poverty (for example, the message of a mother letting her child/ren go hungry so she could purchase alcohol). This thinking was postulated to be generational in nature, in that the feeblemindedness of the welfare mother was deemed to set the course for future feebleminded generations—that welfare users give rise to future users in an endless cycle of dependency (for examples of the intergenerational welfare hypothesis see Antel, 1992; Duncan & Yeung, 1995; McLanahan, 1988; Moffitt, 1983; Solon, Corcoran, Gordon, & Laren, 1988). Inexorably, then, welfare dependency was perceived to be a grave threat to venerable society (Solinger, 1998).

Fast forward to the 1980s, the dependency of women positioned on the male breadwinner shifted. Myriad conceptions of motherhood emerged, albeit each encompassing the paradoxical category of choice as key to the ‘good mother’. For example, the notion that mothers possess choice, either to remain in poverty or to compete in the labour force, became increasingly prevalent. Hence, the (re)pathology of choice was vital in the reconstruction of the term dependency as characterizing bad choices. By the end of the decade, the welfare cheque began its descent and conservative politicians equated welfare dependency with depravity. Dependency was henceforth construed to be the result of bad choices (i.e. to have children while divorced or unmarried), regardless of the inherent racism and sexism which shaped women’s actions (Solinger, 1998). Concurrently, governments became increasingly concerned about the growing fiscal crisis associated with social spending leading to the 1980s and 1990s retrenchment of state funded social programs and services (Gazso, 2009a).

At present, the male breadwinner-female carer model buttresses the ‘welfare’ policy of most Western states in the post-war era (Pascall & Lewis, 2004). While observing some changes with women’s increased participation in the labour market, this model has remained impervious to substantive change. Welfare states have increasingly sought activation strategies (a favoured buzzword for leaders and policy analysts alike) to direct individuals into private financial self sufficiency, rather than willingly provide public welfare provisions (Skevik, 2005). Activation can be defined as, “a range of policies and measures targeted at people receiving public income support or in danger of becoming permanently excluded from the labor market” (Dropping et al., 1999, as cited in Skevik, 2005, p. 42). Most would recognize the operationalization of activation in welfare-to-work or workfare approaches.
With the workfare approach, governments spelled out that it was no longer the responsibility of the state to provide economic support and service delivery, but rather the onus is on the individual to self provision. The discourse of the entitlements associated with state membership (Marshall, 1950; 1981; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) was transformed, centering instead upon the responsibilities and obligations of full citizenship (Lister, 2003; Orloff, 2002). Lone mothers became a critical target since without paid employment or the ability to rely on a male breadwinner’s salary (Gazso, 2009b) many were forced to rely on state benefits. The two main routes to inclusion in society, education and paid employment, have become increasingly difficult to pursue for women juggling the multifarious demands of motherhood. At the same time, non-waged work activities were materially or socially devalued. Skevik (2005) asserts that “the dominant discourse ignores the importance of other forms of (unpaid) work, most importantly community and voluntary work and caring work performed within the family” (p. 47). Therefore, while women were expected to work outside the home, the obligations within the home were retained as their sphere of responsibility and were not considered valid contributions of citizenship.

Hence, the notion of dependency is wrought with embedded meanings which have shifted with the times, albeit always holding significant implications for women. As opposed to dependency’s antithesis, choice (the idea that women have the opportunity to choose their situation and moral resolve throughout the life course) continues to be problematic. Breitzkreuz (2005) discusses the apparent contradiction in the welfare dependency discourse where, on the one hand, women are praised for their ‘family values’ for being stay at home mothers (dependent on the financial sustenance of their partners), while on the other hand, mothers at home perceived to be dependent on the state are depicted as lazy and unproductive.

The conservative Right’s talk of ‘family values’ and ‘family breakdown’ is invariably set upon the ideal of self-sufficiency, and thus, the person on welfare “can only be incorporated as a full citizen by fulfilling the role of the ‘independent’ wage earner” (Kittay, 1998, p. 124). Kittay (1998) therefore argues that welfare reform amounts to a challenge to the reproductive rights of women, namely “poor women’s right to bear children” (p. 124). Moreover, aid tied to conditions—like mandatory paternity establishment—affects women’s exit options in decisions to flee abusive relationships, even while over half of women entering SA in the United States are
coming out of situations of domestic violence. She further asserts that “to be compelled to leave your child in a stranger’s care, or with no care at all, and to accept whatever work is offered is another form of subordination, not a liberation. It devalues the work women traditionally have done” (Kittay, 1998, p. 124). Hence, while facing significant barriers in reaching higher levels of education and employment due to their caretaking responsibilities, women’s labour in the home is not considered work at all (Craig, 2004). Women solely engaged in caring labour and domestic responsibilities, considered improper, are judged to have chosen badly; while the illusion of independence pervades, only sustainable because women ceaselessly engage in this work.

3.4 Stigma and the SA Participant

The origins of stigma are a widely misunderstood phenomenon. Often linked to terms such as prejudice and stereotypes, stigma is frequently attached to locally and culturally constructed understandings or perceptions of deviance. Stigma, via a negotiation of a shared reality, allows for the creation and recreation of the mutually understandable ‘us’ to ward off the threatening ‘them’. Indeed, there is some evidence that some particular characteristics bearing stigma appear common across cultures, for example, mental illness, facial distortions and homosexuality (Stangor & Crandall, 2000). Stangor and Crandall (2000) contend that the production of stigma attached to specific groups is a result of myriad functions and threats perceived by individuals in society. The functions of stigma point to the provision of personal benefits for those outside of the stereotyped ‘Other’. Some functions include: the potential for information generation, providing information via a simplified social perception; and the use of comparisons of in-groups and out-groups to enhance the self esteem and social identity for members of the in-group.

Threats also provide an equally valid function of stigma, demonstrating the protection of the self from perceived harm. One such threat can take its form as a ‘moral undermining,’ (Crandall, 2000, p. 78) in which members in society develop a shared ideology which creates a value hierarchy, prioritizing idealizations and violations of the moral order established. The justification ideologies of stigma are what lead to the general acceptance of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of individuals labelled as ‘Other’. A study by Zucker and Weiner (1993, as cited in Crandall, 2000) found that conservatism (strongly attached to this particular justification ideology) correlated positively with an individual’s belief in the importance of
individual causes for poverty, and thus not surprisingly, conservative beliefs correlated negatively with the importance of structural factors. In policy terms then, individuals espousing a conservative value system are far less likely to advocate for public assistance to the poor (Crandall, 2000).

In a structural equation modeling study, Mickelson and Williams (2008) found that internalized stigma is actually greater than experienced stigma. Women in their study were more likely to report feelings of being ashamed of their poverty rather than reports of actual experiences in which they felt they had been treated differently as a result of their poverty. Women from low income backgrounds perceived sense of stigma was more significantly felt, than occurred experientially. Moreover, internalized stigma was related to lower levels of self-esteem, while experienced stigma was linked to less perceived support available from members within the network of the individual. The amalgam of stereotype awareness, self-identification, and perceived discrimination produced the perceived stigma for women in the study. The difference between experienced and internalized stigma is perhaps well illustrated in Swift and Birmingham’s (2000) study. The authors report that the Canadian SA participants in their study were keenly aware of the stigma attached to SA utilization, internalizing an appropriate amount of shame, as compared to a group of Somali women who had immigrated to Canada, and as such, had not internalized the stigma associated with welfare access. Their experience with stigma was not as vivid as those Canadian born.

A demonstration of the most effective form of power (Foucault, 1978), women may not directly experience stigma events, but may still believe they have (or will) experience them in any given interaction. The internalized and experienced expressions of stigma are therefore tied to a woman’s personal feelings of shame, concrete experiences of societal stigma and discrimination. Mickelson and Williams (2008) conclude their study by stating that policy interventions must be directed at repairing the self-esteem and fear of rejection by others in order to facilitate women’s comfort with accessing assistance, claiming that “women would benefit from interventions that de-emphasize blame and focus on active solutions” (p. 926). However, rather than focusing on interventions which foster a healthy self-esteem, the use of stigma is clearly part of public policy’s ideological tool to shame SA participants in the post-welfare state. This ideology clearly targets specific intersections for particular deprecation.
3.5 *Stigmatized Intersections of SA Participation*

Considering the multiple intersections of individuals (various facets of sexual orientation, race, gender, age, geographic location, etc.) adds complexity to the analysis (see Collins, 1998). None of these categories, of course, can be considered dichotomous but are open to inspection and change. In order to circumvent the proclivity to categorize intersections of ‘woman’ or ‘race’, the norm in the mainstream welfare literature, it is important to incorporate an intersectional lens in this study. Clearly, the intersections of race and gender are key constructs in the welfare dependency discourse; indeed, certain intersections appear particularly targeted for contempt and correction. In the United States, being a young, unmarried, Black woman carries distinct ideological baggage. In fact, Roberts (1996) contends that welfare is a code word for race, specifically being Black (even though the majority of welfare participants in the United States are not Black). Racism permeates the policy agenda, casting the ‘culture of poverty’ a problem of the Black population, as if the legacy of slavery and systemic discrimination never existed. Make no mistake, policy makers have purposefully aimed to exclude particular individuals from full citizenship (Roberts, 1996), alongside the media harnessed to play into the branding and (re)production of social constructions surrounding SA participants.

Clearly the dependency discourse, in its variety of forms and nuances, has and continues to be stigmatizing to women. The entangling of sexism and racism pervade the welfare discourse, such that the ‘culture of poverty’ is assumed to envelope particular social locations of gender, race, geographic location, age and sexual orientation. The ideologically driven discourse assumes that women make bad choices that result in dependency; penalize and stigmatize them for it, rather than focusing attention on the environmental, social, political and economic conditions which fundamentally influence the direction of a woman’s life course.
3.6 Social Capital

Welfare entitlements have increasingly been jettisoned in favour of individual, household, neighbourhood and community answers to meet the needs of citizens (Lister, 2003). Consequently, a number of bodies of literature have since become popularized each reflecting different responses to the post-welfare state and global neoliberal restructuring. Social capital has become one such body of literature, epitomizing the necessary ingredients of active citizenship (Staeheli & Clarke, 2003), used by governments, development planners, academics and international organizations. While the theoretical framework has achieved ascendancy in many academic disciplines, the concept shortchanges women by failing to recognize a variety of forms of active participation in society, not simply the traditionally defined ‘public sphere’. Some would argue that the concept is congruent with neoliberalist ideology which promotes citizen engagement in order for states to rely on the work of women, families and communities to supply essential services once allocated publicly. Moreover, as agents of social reproduction, women are impeded from accumulating and maintaining social capital; the fundamental resources that would leverage their economic position in society.

The World Bank (1998) defines social capital as: “the institutions, the relationships, the attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development” (p. 13). Likewise, Robert Putnam, renowned for his contributions to the social capital literature, claims that, “Social capital makes us smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy,” (Putnam, 2000, p. 290). Social capital therefore leads to: the ability to cope better with trauma and fight illness; lower drop-out rates and higher grade point averages; safer neighbourhoods; heightened economic vibrancy; and generally, higher levels of happiness. Accordingly, “at risk children can realize success in life if their mothers have enough social capital” (Putnam, 2000, p. 306).

Social capital advocates ascertained that a new meta-concept was necessary to recognize the human interactions and networking activities that lead to enhanced economic prosperity. The notion of social capital is not a new innovation but has existed for generations, albeit attached to different conceptual labels. While individualism remains pre-eminent in our political heritage, often linked to notions of human capital (discussed shortly), social capital remains a recurrent
theme, invariably tied to connections (Bourdieu, 1986) within groups and networks. Proponents argue that participation at the local level in society promotes bonds of mutuality and reciprocity that serve to buffer individuals and families from broader economic tensions (Sandel, 1996).

Coleman (1988) discussed social capital from a rational action approach. For Coleman (1988), social capital includes: information channels; norms and sanctions which enforce or constrain certain behaviours in order to build social support, status, and/or other rewards; social networks; forms of social organization; and the creation of human capital for the next generation. Social capital is distinct from other forms of capital: physical capital (i.e. tools for production); financial capital (i.e. wealth accumulation); human capital (i.e. the skills and abilities which enable individuals to act in new ways); and refers to the outcomes of “changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action” (Coleman, 1988, p. 100). Moreover, the accumulation of social capital is different for the sexes, as Coleman (1988) taking an androcentric approach, notes, “The nuclear family itself, in which one or both parents work outside the home, can be seen as structurally deficient, lacking the social capital that comes with the presence of parents during the day, or with grandparents or aunts and uncles in or near the household” (p. S111). His endorsement of social capital then is unequivocally tied to the traditional nuclear family, with women’s place firmly fixed to the home.

Another theorist early in the social capital debate, Ben-Porath (1980) suggested that society functioned on the basis of the ‘F-connection’—family, friends and firms. The interplay between these three components was seen as vital to the development of economic exchange systems. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the personal resources attained by individuals through their membership to a group, with the social obligations and privileges that result from these ‘connections’. In order for these connections to translate into social capital, Putnam (1995) identified the norms of trust, civic engagement, and effective collective action. Such connections or networks generate, “norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). Van Deth (2003) also observes that social capital encompasses connections and networks (structural aspects), in tandem with obligations, values, and social norms (cultural aspects). Social capital thus builds trust between actors in society, what Purdue (2001) considers the necessary condition for fostering economic
development, innovation, and the processes of democracy. Ultimately, social capital’s emanating conclusion is: it is not what you know but who you know! (Woolcock, 2001)

Social capital can be characterized as referring to specific networks under the terms: bonding social capital; bridging social capital; and linking social capital. First, bonding social capital binds members of a group together via strong units of social support identified by the intimate ties of closely related people, often associated with survival (i.e. family and friends). Such networks help people get by and cope with the demands of life, providing emotional support and instrumental support (in the form of loans, rides, child care, etc.). Putnam (2000) describes these as inward looking, homogenous groups, often demonstrated in dense ethnic enclaves. Second, bridging social capital connects people from different social groups, referred to by de Souza Briggs (1997; 1998) as networks of social leverage, associated with getting ahead or economic mobility. Social leverage networks help people change and move upward (de Souza Briggs, 2002). Finally, linking social capital describes the patron-client relationship, a vertical relationship in which the weak are linked to powerful (de Souza Briggs, 2004). These types of networks contribute to the ability (or inability) of the individual to reach the ultimate goal of enhanced economic success.

Putnam (2000) identifies specific sites of active participation which are fundamental to the development of social capital: political participation, civic participation and religious participation. Political participation includes various acts of democratic citizenship from exercising one’s right to vote, to one’s political knowledge or activity within political campaigns. Civic participation refers to activities undertaken within non-profit associations, formal organizations, community-based or work-based organizations (i.e. unions and professional societies). Religious participation includes membership within communities of faith, churches and religious organizations. Putnam (2000) notes that “religious involvement is an especially strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy” (p. 67), and “serve(s) civic life both directly, by providing social support to their members and social services to the wider community, and indirectly, by nurturing civic skills, inculcating moral values, encouraging altruism, and fostering civic recruitment among church people” (p. 79).
Putnam (2000) measures social capital, accrued within the sites of participation described, in order to expose the rise and fall of social capital within the United States. While Putnam (2000) argues that individuals during the Second World War were much more civically engaged, following generations witnessed a decline in civic engagement, evidenced by dwindling levels of trust and reciprocity. While acquiescing that trying to identify the culprits of civic decline have proved unfruitful, Putnam (2000) attributes some of the decline in social trust to generational succession, a general rise and fall pattern in civic participation which is demonstrated from generation to generation. Akin to Coleman’s (1988) contention that the accumulation of social capital is fixed within the (breadwinner model) nuclear family, Putnam (2000) claims that from the 1960s, “the downturn in civic engagement coincided with the breakdown of the traditional family unit” (p. 277).

For Putnam (2000), the touchstone of social capital is generalized reciprocity, the notion that ‘if I do something for you now, without expecting anything in return, some day you (or someone else) will repay the favour’. The notion of generalized reciprocity follows a similar thread of theorists promoting the concept of altruism, raised earlier by Richard Titmuss (1970). Titmuss (1970) encouraged the collective production of social services in order to foster the “values of altruism, social integration and fellowship” (Pinker, 2006, p. 14). However, over the years, Putnam (2000) argues that we have lost much of the social trust demonstrated in generalized reciprocity. Moreover, “we have invented new ways of expressing our demands that demand less of us” (Putnam, 2000, p. 183); we appear busier, working harder and working more. Being busier and working harder is particularly characteristic of women in the post-welfare state.

Attachment to the labour force for women has meant both increased opportunity for connections while simultaneously reducing the time necessary to foster these connections. It is “precisely because women’s traditional investments in social capital were so time intensive, (that) their rate of investment has been reduced by their movement into the paid labour force” (Putnam, 2000, p. 195). Women continue to shoulder the domestic and child rearing responsibilities in the home, which invariably decreases their promotion in the workforce and their overall economic prosperity relative to men. While glossing over this trend, Putnam (2000) suggests instead that the decline of social capital is wrought by the complexities of suburbanization, sprawl, electronic entertainment (i.e. the TV generation—demonstrating the
privatization of leisure) and pressures brought about by work (working more, working harder) which contribute to the disintegration of social bonds (Putnam, 2000).

Significantly, a study conducted by Andersen, Grabb and Curtis (2006) found that the decline in the time given to civic association activity from the 1960s to the late 1990s in the United States (Putnam’s [2000] key argument) was observed for American women alone, and not men. This reduction (for either sex) was also not found in the other countries in the study: Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. These countries, therefore, did not witness the fall of civic engagement that Putnam mourns in the United States. Moreover, the increase in television use as an explanation for civic decline, also put forward by Putnam (2000), does not hold given that all of the countries in the study also witnessed an increase in television viewing but did not see significant reductions in time spent in civic associations. Furthermore, Andersen et al. (2006) did not find evidence that the disappearing civic generation (after the civically minded World War II generation) is the cause for waning civic participation, again due to a lack of statistical significance for declining civic participation for the other countries in the study, and also because the authors did not find a significant interaction between age and year in the United States.

Importantly, Andersen et al. (2006) also established that the demands on American women’s free time were much greater vis-à-vis American men’s (not observed in the other countries in the study). Whereas Putnam (2000) notes that it is “plausible to suppose that the movement of women into the paid labor force has been a significant contributor to the national decline in community involvement” (p. 196), the authors found that American women’s larger time commitment to waged labour, in combination with the disproportionate time given to childcare, might be “the principal explanation behind the decline in civic association activity of Americans in recent decades” (Andersen et al., 2006, p. 396). Therefore, this research would indicate that social capital (in this case, expressed as time spent in civic associations) is not equally accumulated or maintained by women versus men. American women’s vast commitments in the home and at work have impeded their ability to accumulate social capital through citizen engagement; not to mention the limited definition of what civic participation is by such researchers. It is likely that due to greater resources and state provisions (childcare,
funded maternity leaves, etc.) in the other countries in the study, women did not experience the decline in civic participation witnessed in the United States (Andersen et al., 2006).

Another significant criticism of the social capital literature lies in the fact that there exists such variety in definitions, parameters and measurements of the elusive concept. There is no broad consensus on the definition of social capital, and hence, its measurements remain murky. Even key proponent de Souza Briggs (2004) argues that social capital runs the risk of being all things to all people, and therefore, may not be a practical concept. Advocates utilize constructs from a variety of literature frameworks (i.e. social cohesion; social inclusion/exclusion; social economy), and as a result, the essential features of social capital are difficult to isolate. Moreover, the concept has largely been oversimplified (for example, the notion that affluence fosters particular networks, not necessarily any network); who does the work (i.e. predominantly women) and which networks are valued (i.e. affluent connections or job related networks) (Graefe, 2004).

In addition, the concept fails to recognize systemic inequalities, by not taking into account sex, race, ethnicity, class and other critical intersections of difference in individuals (Bezanson, 2006a). Recognizing this flaw, de Souza Briggs (2004) asserts, “Not all social ties are created equal (i.e. not all connections connect us to resources that matter)” (p. 152). The trust which is postulated to be a product of civic participation is not a guarantee (Rohe, 2004). Moreover, social leverage, an outcome of social capital identified by de Souza Briggs (1998), does not necessarily translate to bridging connections from the poor to non-poor. Poor individuals’ involvement in networks do not necessarily yield positive economic outcomes or better life chances (de Souza Briggs, 2004). Belonging to a gang, for example, may lead to quite the opposite effect. These aspects however are not readily captured in quantitative measures of social capital (Bezanson, 2006a).

Bezanson (2006a) argues that the concept holds some promise but is also highly problematic for women. She seeks to begin the “crucial task of gendering social capital so that policy outcomes in the Canadian context do not increase the burden of social and caring work onto already overburdened groups” (Bezanson, 2006a, p. 427). Like most social capital advocates, Bezanson (2006a) recognizes that networks of friends, family and neighbours are
paramount to an improved quality of life, act as buffers in survival crises, help individuals get ahead in the market, assist in finding employment and managing day to day activities. Absent or rarely acknowledged from discussions of social capital, however, is unpaid care work and the informal networks established by women. Care work is generally overlooked in the literature as it rests on the male breadwinner and voter citizen model, male citizens who ultimately are cared for and sustained by women (Herd & Harrington-Meyer, 2002). Not surprisingly, the concept thus holds appeal for neoliberal states desiring social engagement without addressing structural inequalities. Unequivocally, the call for heightened active citizenship participation gets states ‘off the hook’ for providing public social services, allowing governments to rely on communities and networks to supply essential services once allocated by the state. As fundamental agents of social reproduction, women are hindered from generating and maintaining bridging social capital, capital that would propel their economic mobility. It is thus not astonishing that many keen advocates of social capital tend to be male (Molyneux, 2002).

Consequently Molyneux (2002) suggests that what goes on under the name social capital is not much more than poor women’s coping strategies in times of economic crises. Social capital assumes stability, not contingent employment, and implies homogeneity within communities while ignoring the imbalance in power relations, that is, those with social capital have greater access to such capital (Purandare, 2005). The concept relies on unpaid work, although it does not value this work or recognize the gender behind it. Such work is generally classified a ‘labour of love’ rather than legitimate work (Molyneux, 2002). Accordingly, social capital translates into a tool for an employability model for welfare states, poignantly expressed, for example, by the state’s expectation that social assistance participants work for their benefits without ensuring the childcare provisions necessary to achieve this end (Punrandare, 2005).

The social capital literature extols the laissez-faire nature of capitalist states which intentionally rests upon a racialized and genderized division of labour, without recognizing the disadvantages afforded by this division. It may be more helpful then to take a provisioning (which I adopt) or a social reproduction approach (taken by Bezanson, 2006a) which recognizes the gendered contextualization of capital maintenance and accumulation, rather than a social capital perspective which turns a blind eye to it.
3.7 New Social Movements’ Literature

Lind (1997) contends that the global emergence of women’s grassroots activities and survival strategies have been in large measure to contend with the neoliberal restructuring processes which have taken place around the world. The oversight of gender as a fundamental construct in these movements stems from conceptual biases in frameworks which neglect women’s critical roles in social reproduction and social change (Beneria, 1992; Lind, 1997). This may be largely due to the fact that the community organizing that provides the momentum for social movements is invisible work (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). It is here where we find that the public and private domains overlap, and are not the neat and disparate categories many have traditionally theorized (Miraftab, 2006; Staeheli & Clarke, 2003; Tiano, 1984). Whereas, as previously demonstrated, social capital and dependency frameworks reproach women for their perceived lack of civic engagement, reliance on public services or failure to demonstrate recognized attributes of independence, the new social movements’ literature will demonstrate how women’s engagement in community activism can be viewed as a useful site to witness valuable contributions to citizenship frequently ignored in the dominant discourse, although this engagement also has its drawbacks.

Remarkably “until recently political sociologists and sociologists of social movements rarely evoked gender as a force in the emergence and development of social movements” (Taylor, 1999). Gender, however, is an instrumental feature of new social movements (Taylor & Whittier, 1998). Moreover, mobilization, leadership patterns, ideologies, strategies and outcomes of social movements are unequivocally gendered (Taylor, 1999). Every successfully executed social movement is backed by a community or network of communities (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). These communities do not happen by chance, but are the result of careful deliberation and organization. Stall and Stoecker (1998) refer to the activities related to community organizing as “localized, often ‘prepolitical’ action that provides the foundation for multilocal and explicitly political social movements” (p. 730). Not only has gender been a neglected area of research regarding social movements, but the gendered nature of community organizing has also been notably absent (Taylor, 1999).
Across the globe, women participate in community organizing to better their neighbourhoods, communities and nations. Specifically, women organize against the forces and structures of globalization and neoliberalism (Neysmith & Chen, 2002) which have had detrimental consequences for their daily lives. Although neoliberal policies are widely seen as immutable, women have made significant contributions aimed at thwarting and even neutralizing some of the effects of these processes. With the end of the Cold War era, the processes of neoliberalism have become preeminent, felt ubiquitously by all, regardless of geography. Neoliberalism, a term applied across many discourses and presenting a wide array of definitions, is often thought of as comprising the political goals of economic liberalization and privatization depicted by numerous regional trade agreements, globalization, technological innovation and state retrenchment. According to modernization theory, the benefits accrued from the achievement of these political goals trickle down to those in the lowest rungs of society. Often, the language of neoliberalism is written as unbiased and gender neutral, with gains to be amassed by everyone, regardless of the privileged/oppressed status of specific intersections of race, gender, class and location. Unequivocally, however, the processes of neoliberalism have a profound effect on those lacking power and resources (Lind, 2005).

The processes of neoliberalism have had different meanings and outcomes for different geographic areas. In Latin America, the effects of neoliberalism have been exacerbated by structural adjustment policies (aptly coined SAPS), the backbone of neoliberal restructuring. These policies have firmly implanted the notion that families must ‘absorb’ the effects of restructuring, with little to no attention given to women and the disproportionate amount of work they do to maintain their families and communities. Moreover, governments have institutionalized the work of women as a viable development strategy. In this way, women have been lauded as the ‘mothers of the nation’, providing for themselves and their families, whilst maintaining their productive roles to deliver resources and labour for countries of the North (Lind, 2005).

Beneria (1992) found that the ‘privatization of the struggle’ is common in Mexico City. Poor households have increasingly turned to the family to provide assistance—not the state, organizations or even informal networks for help. Women rely on their families, neighbourhoods, communities, civic organizations or nongovernmental organizations (NGO) for
survival. It is exceedingly difficult to analyze, however, the extent to which collective answers are found within the private realm of the family and informal networks (Beneria, 1992). This is further compounded by the fact that such informal networks in community and family could overlap in different social contexts. How does one measure the contributions in the home when there is generally no market value attributed to domestic and ‘private realm’ activities? Whilst institutionalized as national development strategy, the contributions of women in the private sphere are not articulated specifically or readily captured quantitatively.

‘Good mothering’ (and/or grandmothers) includes struggling for better schools, improved housing, safer neighbourhoods (Naples 1992). hooks (1990) recognizes the “homeplace” (p. 42) as a site for resistance for African Americans, while Naples (1992) acknowledges the work of activist mothers engaged with ‘community othermothers’ (Collins, 1990) who band together in response to the needs of their own children or the children in their communities. However, the community organizing work of women regularly is mistaken for charity work rather than direct, at times adversarial, calls for social change (Finks, 1984). The mother role thus allows for a significant site of resistance, oft unrecognized in the social movements’ literature.

Lind (2005) recognizes that women’s roles present paradoxical functions. In some cases, women operate out of traditionally defined gender roles (i.e. mothers’ movements fomented to challenge violence and human rights abuses), while others aim for more macro level change through government planning structures, non-governmental organizations or grassroots organizing efforts. Relying on the traditional roles of women in social reproduction, the community organizing and leadership of women in resisting the processes of neoliberalism has been adopted by Latin American states as national development policy. Women’s involvement in antineoliberal protests, initiated in response to the appalling conditions of poverty and oppression in communities, is frequently used to the advantage of governments faced with rising inflation, currency devaluation, mass unemployment and escalating cost of services resulting from SAPs and neoliberal processes (Lind, 2005).

When Marilene de Souza and five other mothers learned that their children had been abducted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, mass mobilization and protest formed, spawning the famous
Acari Eleven case. Through the tragic circumstances of the abduction, the ‘Mothers of Acari’ were afforded a forum to fight societal injustices. Recognizing their plight as rooted in the conditions of poverty in their community, the Mothers of Acari were permitted acts of resistance against the myriad forms of systemic violence in their community, protests not likely tolerated outside the role of concerned mother (Lind, 1997). Parallel mothers’ groups have formed elsewhere in Latin American countries using motherhood as a cover and means to organize to traverse class differences.

In interviewing predominantly African American and Puerto Rican women from low income communities, Naples (1998) found that women community workers perceive citizenship as achieved in community for the benefit of the collective, rather than tied to an individual entity. In community workers’ staunch recognition that significant improvements to communities cannot transpire without massive structural changes within economic and political contexts, workers draw on their social roles as mothers (or grandmothers) and traditional female identities to justify radical actions to improve their lives and secure greater social, economic and political rights. One women interviewed stated that the “ongoing efforts to fight for her children’s well being and her community’s self determination defy the dominant constructions of low income women as lacking political interest or motivation to work” (Naples, 1998, p. 299).

Women do not operate alone, but organize within communities locally and abroad. Lind (2005) explains,

The history of women’s organizing in Latin America has been transnational in the sense that feminists have received international support and funding and have been in constant communication with feminists from other countries in order to construct their own local (community, national) struggles (p. 132).

Women have been fundamental players in the movement towards thwarting the detrimental consequences of the activities of foreign corporations. In May 1992, women protested the role of Citibank in Quito, Ecuador. In this struggle, as with many other anti-neoliberal protests, women partnered with broader networks of feminists reflecting a shared identity. This identity is defined through the organizing process and the interactions of multifarious individuals and groups in the process: development practitioners, politicians, neighbours, feminists, NGO activists and
community leaders (Lind, 2005). The ideas of feminists, loosely defined, traverse across national boundaries and become redefined and refined to suit the unique social and political contexts of women in their communities (Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

Whittier (2002) claims that, “collective identity (thus) is an interpretation of a group’s collective experience: who members of the group are, what their attributes are, what they have in common, how they are different from other groups, and what the political significance of all this is” (p. 302). The Mothers of Acari’s collective identity, for example, was perceived as operating out of an oppressed economic class, rather than as women in a specific racial class (the women were Afro-Brazilians) (Lind, 2005). Furthermore, Robnett (2002) argues that, “through collective identity processes, movement actors develop a shared cultural toolkit (a repertoire of protest methods including nonviolent tactics)” (p. 267). These collective identities, together with the ideological and symbolic structures constructed by movement actors, are shaped by the interactions of participants and are perpetually transformed by the structural context, external, and internal forces surrounding the movement, as well as by the experiences of the social movement itself (Robnett & Whittier, 2002).

Although gender neutral language is conventionally used to theorize social movements, gender hierarchy exists as much within protest spaces as within institutional spaces (Taylor, 1999). Acker (1990) contends that gender hierarchy is embedded within the structure of all organizations, typified by the idealized male worker carrying a masculine ethic of reason. The language associated with masculinity and femininity reproduced in language is often taken up by social movement activists to frame their messages in such a way as to tug on the emotional heartstrings of the community and mobilize action (Taylor, 1999), as used by inculcating the mother role as a shared identity, a permissible foe to the processes of neoliberalism.

By taking on conventional gender roles, the women in Quito, Ecuador, invoked their status as ‘mothers of the nation’ to question the role of Citibank in the collection of the nation’s foreign debt and its repercussion of unremitting poverty. The ‘redrawing of boundaries’ is apparent in this community organizing venture as the private and public spheres become blurred, and traditional gender roles are transgressed and/or reinforced to suit the end goals of women. In effect, gender dualistic metaphors supply the cultural symbols for social movement actors to
“identify commonalities, draw boundaries between themselves and their opponents, and legitimate and motivate collective action” (Taylor, 1999, p. 21). Traversing gender roles and engaging in leadership activities within the public (male) realm, it was also necessary for Ecuadorian women to reinforce their status as mother to gain traction with other women and secure legitimacy by the state (Lind, 2005).

From community organizing activities, women gain new skills in leadership, a new consciousness derived from a shared identity and empowerment as they find a voice to articulate their concerns. Simultaneously, however, occupying a transformative discursive space, actors within movements are thus constrained by the hegemonic discourses they seek to resist (Whittier, 2002). While the processes of leadership, shared consciousness and empowerment present new opportunities and benefits for women, they are struck by a double-edged sword in that these very activities are also utilized to absolve the state from its role in welfare distribution. Governments are thereby excused from responding to economic crises, counting on women to step up to protest against the adverse effects of foreign corporations, while continuing their conventional roles in the maintenance of their families and communities (Whittier, 2002).

The leadership of women in their families and communities cannot be considered as confined to public-private dichotomized spaces. While community organizing remains rooted in relationships which may be perceived to exist in the ‘private sphere’, the organizing process problematizes the split between public and private, since it comprises “activities which do not fall smoothly in either category” (Tiano, 1984, p. 21). Miraftab (2006) avers that “binary constructs are known to damage the constituent at the lower end of the social hierarchy” (p. 208). The private-public split thus equates to a matrix of domination along structural axes of gender, race and social class which distorts and hides women’s work in the organizing process (Staeheli & Clark, 2003). Unmistakably, the organizing efforts conducted by women extend beyond the confines of the household, blurring into the public life in neighbourhoods, communities and larger society. The predilection to see women’s work as fundamentally rooted in and fixed within the private sphere discredits their efforts, including the seemingly more ‘public’ activities in which they regularly engage.
The work of community organizing has as its end goals empowerment, human interdependence and co-active power. Women involved in this work develop positive self-concepts and self confidence, a more critical worldview, while cultivating their skills and resources for social action. The struggle does not always result in the anticipated outcome in terms of social change, but the process itself bands people together, forming relationships which may foster the conditions for future movement and change. Women work alongside others as mentors and co-facilitators of the empowerment process (Robnett & Whittier, 2002), with the belief that all have the capacity to be leaders, in a group centred leadership model (Payne, 1989).

Miraftab (2006) highlights the use of space in the organizing process. Delineating two spaces, the author juxtaposes invited spaces, occupied by those grassroots activities and their allied non-governmental organizations sanctioned by donors and government, vis-à-vis invented spaces, spaces occupied by the poor whose collective actions directly confront authority structures and challenge the status quo. These spaces regularly interact and coalesce, and are not dichotomous. While invited spaces cope with existing systems and are legitimized by government leaders, invented spaces operate to resist the status quo and envision a different future. Miraftab (2006) adeptly demonstrates the operation of these spaces through an analysis of the housing and eviction struggles in South Africa (Miraftab, 2006). In this analysis, the importance of recognizing the myriad spaces, activities, and roles of women is again pivotal in understanding the raison d’être of social movements and how these movements unfold.

Consequently, women’s organizing offers great benefits and significant losses. Women in Ecuador, for example, have gained political visibility in political protests, evidenced by new policies on affirmative action and antidiscrimination, representation of social movements in party elections and funding for women’s NGOs and research on women. However, the community kitchens (Peru and Bolivia); Glass of Milk programs (Peru), food for work programs (Bolivia), women’s NGOs and involvement in welfare distribution may be considered ‘too successful’, representing serious losses for women. By upholding women as service deliverers in private economies, the state incongruously relies on the assumption that women have endless time to commit to service delivery, do not require high salaries (if any), and can extend their traditional reproductive roles to community management. Lind (2005) contends that “the new NGO-based welfare network has more effectively facilitated the redistribution of social welfare among
community groups, including women’s and neighbourhood associations” (p. 145). Hence, women have gained visibility by the state, albeit at great cost (Lind, 2005).

The transfer of public services and responsibilities to private households under neoliberalism highlights the unwavering reliance on women’s unpaid work within homes and communities. Protestors of these arrangements are seen to be ultra-left and outcasts of the contemporary social order. Hence, in the neoliberal era, women are the unsung heroes providing free care work in their families, while running soup kitchens for their communities (Lind, 2005). Although women are engaged in myriad activities to sustain their families and communities, such engagement is not normally recognized in contemporary frameworks for understanding work and participation.
3.8 Provisioning

As the neoliberal state has been privatized, women have become the bearers of responsibilities previously in the domain of state welfare distribution. Accordingly, women have become service providers in community development, health care, day care, family and local market production (Lind, 2005). Even when engaged in waged labour outside the home, women continue to perform a disproportionate share of household and childcare tasks. By defining women’s work and men’s work as such, the essential nature of each sex is produced and reproduced (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Are the public and private domains of work truly separate entities? As previously argued, this binary must certainly be problematized as the numerous and varied activities of women cannot clearly be demarcated as the scope of one sphere over and above another (Donath, 2000; Tiano, 1984), as the proclivity to dichotomize the two spheres has the detrimental outcome of demoting one to an inferior status over the other. Work relegated to the domestic sphere deemed as private or of familial responsibility is unpaid and undervalued (Neysmith, 2000). If the private/public binary is discarded, recognizing what women do (formally and informally) should be considered valuable attributes of citizenship.

Provisioning offers an avenue to recognize the vast and myriad activities of women, though often invisible (Baker Collins, Neysmith, Porter & Reitsma-Street, 2009), these activities are valid contributions to the market, to the state and to society as a whole. Women actively participate daily in provisioning activities, the modes of their participation, however, are not captured in the current discourse on citizenship (Herd & Harrington-Meyer, 2002). Indeed, the transfer of responsibility from the market onto women via unpaid labour, or public provisioning to private provisioning (Beneria, 1995), erroneously leads to the assumption that this labour is costless and does not pose additional strain on families (Baker Collins et al., 2009).

Provisioning is a relatively new concept presented in the feminist economics literature; taken up by theorists who seek to recognize the entirety of work engaged in by women (Benería, 1995; Baker Collins et al., 2009; Donath, 2000; MacDonald, 1995; Nelson, 1998; Neysmith & Reitsma-Street, 2005; Neysmith, Reitsma-Street, Baker Collins & Porter, 2004; Power, 2004). The components of provisioning entail: the “inclusion of unpaid and caring labor; emphasis on well-being; analysis of economic, social and political processes and power relations; articulation
of feminist ethical values, and inclusion of class, race-ethnicity and other factors of difference” (Power, 2004). Within the theoretical construct of provisioning, the formal and informal activities of women are examined, including the breadth and depth of the duties, time, and relational dimensions of their relationships (Baker Collins et al., 2009; Neysmith et al., 2004). Beneria (1992) notes however the problems associated with measuring all of what women do, as many activities have not been adequately researched or go undocumented.

Women not only engage in paid employment in the labour market, but contribute in multifarious ways to the underground economy and informal work (for example, in bartering or exchange), household and domestic work, caring work (e.g. caring for sick, young or older persons inside or outside the home, etc.) and volunteer and community work (Neysmith et al., 2004). Provisioning therefore takes place in the market, household and community, and “consists of those daily activities performed to ensure the survival and well-being of oneself and others” (Neysmith et al., 2004, p. 196). In the course of taking care of everyday tasks and getting by, relationships are fostered which help women provision for those for whom they have responsibility. These relationships are essential in the provisioning process, specifically assisting women in their interactions in the other economy.

Work fulfilled in the home is often facilitated by exchange conducted in the other economy. Donath (2000) considers the division between competition in markets and the activities in the ‘other economy’. Operating alongside the market economy, the method of exchange where the maximization of profits is paramount, is the ‘other economy’, an economy centred on reciprocity and gift-giving. Donath (2000) notes, “The other economy is concerned with the direct production and maintenance of human beings. This production and maintenance of human beings is an end in itself, not a means to producing commodities” (p. 116). Commonly, exchange interactions are performed in the other economy as individuals do not have the money or resources to pay for necessary goods and services, relying instead on others in reciprocal relationships. However, the contributions of the other economy, while deemed necessary, are given diminished value (Donath, 2000). Measuring the activities within the other economy would invariably necessitate explicit recognition of these contributions, and hence, could not be so easily diminished or ignored.
As acknowledged, contributions to the other economy are not conducted for self-interest and do not benefit from the economic gains found in the market (Power, 2004). The centrality of the ‘other economy’ is human well-being, revealed through people provisioning collectively to survive. However, there lies the rub. Whilst at the same time devalued (Donath, 2000), contributions of the other economy are systemically entrenched in order to maintain the current system. While affording individuals the ability to come together to collectively provision within the other economy, and all the benefits accrued from these relationships, provisioning efforts also result in a reduction of services provided by the state. Hence, as demonstrated in the discussion of new social movements’, the state has jettisoned social policies (once thought to be the foundation of social rights), in favour of social provisioning activities, having women take up the slack. Women therefore shoulder the responsibilities of social rights (Staeheli, 2003) once allocated by the state, however, they do so without compensation or recognition (Donath, 2000).

Women in low income households unable to survive on social assistance alone find ways to provision merely to scrape by. Women therefore find avenues to gain access to necessary resources via using multiple agencies and sources. One respondent in Baker Collins et al.’s (2009) study indicated that in order to make ends meet, she regularly visited food banks; in fact, she went to all the food banks in the vicinity of her home. Relationships, developed in the process of accessing these services, generate important emotional support that serve to buffer the stress and demoralization associated with feelings of being unable to provision for those for whom women have responsibility.

Simultaneously, however, attempting to secure additional sources to supplement one’s financial status is strictly regulated within a conditions-attached policed social support system, upon which many low income households rely. While withdrawing funding from the public system and downloading responsibilities and provisions to private households, neoliberal governments have constructed a risky policy context for women in general, and certain groups of marginalized women, in particular. As a result, the creative methods and measures taken by women to supplement their finances are analyzed within the surveillance mechanism of the government in order for policy administrators to ascertain whether these activities (i.e. side jobs, unclaimed bartering exchanges) might be construed as violations of the regulations, thereby jeopardizing one’s access to public assistance; funds which have increasingly been slashed over
recent years. At the same time, “the policy context both reduces public provisions and polices their private substitutes,” (Baker Collins et al., 2009, p. 34).

One of the many uncompensated responsibilities of women is in the area of care work. Herd and Harrington-Meyer (2002) claim that “care work...is an active form of participatory citizenship with far-reaching civic benefits” (p. 666); however, generally women’s disproportionate responsibility for care work is unacknowledged, including how this work impedes or augments conventional forms of civic activity (Herd & Harrington-Meyer, 2002). Hence, it is imperative to adopt policies which hold men more accountable for care activities, while recognizing that these activities are valued contributions of citizenship (Kershaw, 2006). As the post-welfare state’s breadwinner-caregiver division of labour perpetually elevates the breadwinner both materially and socially, the caregiver is inexorably marginalized. Kershaw (2006), therefore, advocates ‘carefair’ through an “incentive structure (that) would be reorganized to urge men to assume a more equitable share of the informal care work that is just as essential to social (re)production as in market production” (p. 357). For Kershaw (2006), care work must become a requisite component of men’s citizenship since their erstwhile irresponsibility for this work fuels women’s economic insecurity and dependence; expressed as unpaid mothers and wives in the household, and as poorly paid domestic and child care providers in the labour force. One way the caring role might be elevated is via the extension of funded paternity leaves, encouraging fathers to take valuable (paid) time with their children, as is the case in Norway where approximately 70 percent of men take some paternity leave (Kershaw, 2006).

Without recognition, women’s work outside the labour force is devalued (Breitkreuz, 2005) as compared to paid labour, the key route for ideal citizenship (Craig, 2004; Lister, 2007). In fact, unpaid work is actually not considered work at all, rendering it invisible (Craig, 2004). To remedy this quandary, proponents of provisioning call for more explicit recognition of the gendered nature of the economy (Bakker, 1994; MacDonald, 2005), acknowledging all forms of work activities, including waged and unwaged labour (Taylor, 2004).
3.9 Social Exclusion and Inclusion

Individuals and groups have continuously been subject to marginalization and oppression due to the possession of specific undervalued social locations; identities having to do with gender, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ability, age and spatial location in society. Young (2000) asserts that “few would deny that members of less privileged structural social groups are under-represented in most contemporary democracies” (p. 141). The disparities confronting individuals in aspects pertaining to privilege, representation and material prosperity epitomize the essence of the social exclusion literature. The concept thus represents a violation of social justice as social exclusion conflicts with equality of opportunity and represents an inability for certain individuals to participate effectively in society (Barry, 1998). Since the original term, ‘les exclus’ entered the literature, social exclusion has been portrayed as a series of social problems to be reckoned with. The following discussion points to how the literature has been adopted by neoliberal states to differentiate those who ought to be excluded from those to be included. Indeed the scholarship has been utilized across Europe and North America to contribute to the dependency discourse, rather than to interrogate and challenge it.

A theoretical framework emerging from Europe during the 1970s, social exclusion was first introduced by René Lenoir, Secretary of State for Social Action in the Chirac Government of 1974. Lenoir put forward for consideration specific social categories of the population who were deemed to be unprotected or ‘excluded’ from the French social security system (Beall, 2002; Good-Gingrich, 2003; Silver, 1994). At a time of unremitting stagflation, a restructuring of economies due to European integration, a retreat of government from welfare policies, and high migration and immigration, European states witnessed heightened social and economic tensions (Shakir, 2005). Over the past several decades, many countries and international organizations have, analogous to the Chirac Government, adopted the social exclusion discourse to frame the poverty, marginalization, and disadvantage of citizens within their respective jurisdictions.

Accordingly, Tony Blair, with his mantra ‘no rights without responsibilities’, erected the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 in the United Kingdom. The United Nations (2005), the World Bank (2001), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ([OECD], 1998), and the European Commission (2001) also erected units and/or published documents analyzing
the consequences of self-defined explanations and consequences of social exclusion. Closer to home, in Canada, the discourse emerged in response to visions specifically of social inclusion, forwarded by numerous theorists seeking answers to growing social inequalities. The Canadian Policy Research Networks, Laidlaw Foundation, Robarts’ Centre for Canadian Studies at York University, Canadian Council on Social Development and the City of Toronto’s Community and Neighbourhood Services (2003) have all presented research on the topic.

De Haan (1998) describes the French definition of social exclusion to represent a “rupture of social bonds” (p. 10), recognizing that structural processes lead to the breakdown of key societal systems which ensure the social integration of the individual. The effects of this disintegration are feelings of isolation and insecurity qualitatively expressed by members of society. While having a relational perspective with social integration and solidarity as end goals for the French, the social exclusion discourse for the British have centred on matters of poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Consequently, the social exclusion discourse employed by many British, American, and Canadian theorists has been used to refer to a category or kind of individual (Good-Gingrich, 2003). This ‘kind’ of individual is quantifiably measured utilizing key markers of success.

Particularly lost when one departs from the French perspective of social exclusion/inclusion is their individual and relational expressions. One concern for opponents of the social exclusion literature, and the policy discourses which take up the literature, is its ability to imbue rigorous ‘evidenced based practice’ with distinct ideological beliefs and values, rendering claims incontrovertible legitimacy under the guise of ‘impartial’ scientifically verified research. Studies adopting an ‘evidenced-based’ quantitative methodology are not effectively able to capture the thoughts and ideas of research participants who perceptibly experience the markers of success (inclusion) or failure (exclusion). Such expressions are better captured in qualitative research, not as readily utilized in many social exclusion/inclusion frameworks.

Saloojee (2005) claims that processes promoting equal access to participation and valued belonging are essential in reversing social exclusion in society. At times, social inclusion has been considered to be simply the reverse of social exclusion, perhaps existing as a result of some added measures taken to thwart exclusion, while advancing the prominence of the socially
Richmond and Saloojee (2005) understand social inclusion to include the validation of diversity, together with the recognition of the commonality of lived experiences, which they deem central elements of social inclusion. The authors define social inclusion as: “a proactive, human development approach to social well-being that calls for more than the removal of barriers or risks. It requires investments and action to bring about the conditions for inclusion…” (p. viii-ix). Likewise, Mitchell and Shillington (2005) maintain that to experience social inclusion is to be included across the multiple axes of well-being (physical, economic, human, social, and political), and “requires sufficient resources and rights and capacity to participate within the environments and structures of the society in which one lives” (p.3). Hence, Luxton (2005) asserts that current social relations, institutions, and cultural practices must be transformed to accommodate everyone. She argues that “the centre must be reconfigured to encompass the practices of those from the margins. This aspect of social inclusion is particularly important when it comes to eliminating inequality while ensuring and supporting diversity. Great care must be taken to ensure that policies aimed at integration do not result in assimilation” (Luxton, 2005, p. 10). However, is social inclusion beneficial, even acceptable, for people living on the margins in society? Shakir (2005) argues that any static notion of inclusion will inevitably be hegemonic and oppressive. One must therefore not only pay attention to the consequences or outcomes of social exclusion, but to the institutions which (re)create exclusionary processes. For that reason, some theorists contend that the values and ideology of neoliberalism are embedded within the social exclusion rhetoric. An arguably relabeled variant of traditional poverty analyses (Barry, 1998), social exclusion is presented as homogenizing (Good-Gingrich, 2003)—everyone appears the same in order to distinguish one from an ‘Other’. Notwithstanding, the concept has gained momentum over recent years, becoming a significant lexicon in political, economic, academic, and social milieus, albeit bearing myriad connotations and definitions.

Unemployed individuals and ‘workless households’ (Burchardt, LeGrand & Piachaud, 1999) are commonly the units of analysis—a recurring theme within the social exclusion literature—tied to traditional explanations of poverty (Barry, 1998), demonstrated in growing popularity of terms such as ‘underclass’ (Beall, 2002; Handler & Hasenfield, 1991) and ‘dependency’ (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Indeed, “social exclusion is most often operationalized as a tally of individuals—especially women and visible minorities—who lack secure attachments
to the labour market” (Good-Gingrich, 2003, p. 95). In these analyses, to be socially excluded means to be outside the norm—outside of paid employment, and therefore, excluded from the benefits thereof. Individuals are categorized into kinds of persons (i.e. unemployed, homeless, drug addicts, criminals, poor people) measured by the yardstick of quantifiable outcomes such as homelessness, unemployment and poverty. This ‘kind’ of exclusion continuously recognizes particular groups as flawed, deviant, and inherently different, and hence, to be blamed for their own exclusion. The excluded are therefore perceived to need cajoling to leaving their position of dichotomized ‘excluded’ to enter the norm, the solution, the ‘included’ (Shakir, 2005), or employed citizen. Yet what lies in the ‘centre’ of social inclusion to which the excluded are to be straightforwardly inserted? (Good-Gingrich, 2003).

Excluded individuals (interchangeable with excluded groups, as excluded individuals generally fall into prescribed kinds of groups) are considered to be unable to change their circumstances (otherwise, they would not have been excluded to begin with), therefore the included must compel, or coerce, excluded groups to conform to the norm, as difference is considered a manifestation of social exclusion. Shakir (2005) notes that “since there is no structural analysis of marginality or exclusion and the concept is, once again, familiarly linear, social inclusion becomes a paternalistic policy option rather than one that challenges historical and existing power imbalances in our society in order to create real change” (p. 205). Why social inequalities exist is not questioned, nor is there consideration of how public policy plays a role in perpetuating the exclusion of groups in society. Moreover, social inclusion is maintained via the exclusion of others, “not simply an unforeseen by-product of a society’s flaws but rather a necessary pre-condition for the inclusion of others” (Shakir, 2005, p. 209). To have an included, you must have an excluded as a reference category (Shakir, 2005). Social exclusion is therefore considered necessary for maintaining the status quo, while perpetually keeping people in their place (Good-Gingrich, 2008).

Social inclusion, exclusion’s theorized mirror image, becomes realized as a result of integration into the labour market, purported to be universally attainable by all. Good-Gingrich (2003) explains that the neoliberal fixation on the market within the individual kind perspective of social exclusion rests on the ideological concerns for the misfortune, failings, and poor choices of individuals in the creation of their own social exclusion. From this perspective, the
relational and systemic qualities of social exclusion are jettisoned, replaced instead by a simplistic set of interventions aimed at coaxing or enticing the individual to avoid the snares of social exclusion. Indeed, the underclass brand of social exclusion focuses on the moral and behavioural defects of the excluded in order to reinforce the inclusion-exclusion partition (Mitchell & Shillington, 2005).

Consequently, the social exclusion/inclusion literature is particularly salient in recognizing how specific groups become constructed as inadequate and excluded citizens. Welfare-to-work programs unequivocally bear the assumptions of social exclusion as kind or category. Individuals are expected to avoid social assistance at all costs, and justifiably, punitive administrative and surveillance processes (Herd, Mitchell & Lightman, 2005) can be imposed and provisions maintained at meagre levels, so as to be repulsive to the ordinary ‘included’ citizen. Social exclusion as ‘kind’ works to exclude groups of individuals (i.e. lone mothers) by questioning their attachment to the labour market, and consequently, excluding them from the benefits of social inclusion. The terms ‘self-sufficiency’ and ‘personal responsibility’, explicitly accentuated in workfare policies, serve to set the standards by which individuals are measured as citizens (Good-Gingrich, 2008). Inserting the excluded into the realm of the socially included, however, becomes highly problematic as many are erratically and precariously employed (Craig, 2004), cycling in and out of employment (Evans, 2007; Lightman, Herd & Mitchell, 2005b) in a fragmented and unequal labour market (Fudge & Vosko, 2001). The division of unemployed and employed (excluded and included) categories (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1997; Ney, 1999) must therefore be problematized as these categories demonstrably do not conform to a neat divide.
3.10 Analyses of the Mainstream Research on Welfare Dependence

In 1986, American President Reagan affirmed the need for the ‘spider’s web of dependency’ of the ‘welfare culture’ to be addressed (Pear, 1986). Akin to our American counterparts, to tackle the 1990s rise in social assistance (SA) caseloads, the ‘tough love’ approach was adopted by the Government of Ontario. With cuts of 21.6 percent to SA benefits, Ontario Works (OW) was introduced with the mandate that participants work for their benefits. The sizable deductions in SA benefits, as with the welfare-to-work approach, were adopted to contend with the ideological foundation of the welfare system: welfare dependency (Lindbeck, 1995; Moffitt, 1992; Plant, 1984). At present, much of the mainstream literature on welfare dependency is American (Duncan & Yeung, 1995; McLanahan, 1988; Moffitt, 1981; Solon, Corcoran, Gordon, & Laren, 1988), albeit claimed by Canadian researchers.

While the welfare dependency supposition can be traced as far back as the Poor Laws (for a complete geneology see Fraser & Gordon, 2002), the hypothesis became highly politicized, accepted academically (Rein & Rainwater, 1978) and publicly around the same time neoliberal governments began their retreat from welfare state provision (Orloff, 1993, 2002). While specific welfare policies are not the same for different countries, the principles underlying neoliberalism, such as personal responsibility and self reliance, appear to pervade welfare states such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States.

3.11 American Welfare Reform

American politicians denounced the swelling of SA caseloads and the utility of an expensive and profligate structure in the 1980s and 1990s which they perceived served only to maintain the unhealthy addiction of welfare dependents to the system. Public campaigns suggested the government was spending an inordinate amount on the SA system and as a result welfare reforms were enacted. In reality, however, caseloads in the United States had remained relatively stable until the reform measures were introduced, and witnessed dramatic change only after these measures had taken effect. Moreover, at the time the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was introduced, the median length of welfare stay was 23 months, not exactly a lifetime of dependency as alleged (Committee on Ways and Means,
1996, as cited in Secommbe et al., 1998). Interestingly, too, up until 1975, less than three percent of the overall federal budget had been allocated to expenditures for programs within the ‘social safety net’ (MaCurdy & Jones, 2008). Hence, the exaggerated price tag for the SA system announced by politicians would appear to be more ideologically, rather than fiscally, driven.

US welfare reform included the introduction of the PRWORA (1996) establishing federal block grants to states under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) replacing the Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Emergency Assistance and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs. Under TANF, states were given greater say in the design of their SA program, and while AFDC restricted benefits to lone mothers with children, TANF was expanded to include two parent families with children. However TANF reduced benefits, imposed work requirements (Social Security Bulletin, 2002) and life time limitations for SA participants whose receipt was considered to be too protracted (cut off for life after 60 months). States could choose to decrease this time limitation or increase it but the state would then need to foot the bill for benefits exceeding the 60 month limitation. Gooden and Douglas (2006) note how states with higher Black populations have stricter policies expressed through lower lifetime limits (i.e. some as low as 21 months) than states with smaller Black populations. In special circumstances, federal funding is available to states beyond the prescribed limitations, one such circumstance is domestic violence. States that sign on to the Family Violence Option would screen for victims of domestic violence and provide support to these families. However Lindhorst and Padgett (2005) find that these services are often not forthcoming for participants.

A central goal of TANF is to “end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage”. Consequently, with few exceptions, participants are required to work as soon as possible, no later than 2 years after coming on assistance (Social Security Bulletin, 2002). The purposes of the TANF program as described in section 601 of the Social Security Act are to:

provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;

and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families (as cited in Social Security Bulletin, 2002, emphasis added).

As expressed, a significant goal articulated in TANF was the promotion of marriage and family. Mink (2001) documents how TANF achieves this goal via the creation of financial incentives to reduce births for unwed mothers (i.e. illegitimacy bonuses to the five states most successfully reducing the number of non-marital births without raising their abortion rate, essentially offering cash awards to unmarried women by discouraging conception); obliging unmarried young participants to live with their parents to be eligible for welfare; policies aimed at capping family size (restricting benefits for additional children in the family); and mandatory paternity establishment to receive benefits. Fatherhood projects also provided funding to support fatherhood and support healthy marriages (Fineman, Mink & Smith, 2003). The articulation of the promotion of marriage and the two-parent (earner) family in TANF however does appear to be much more overtly expressed than in the Ontario context.

3.12 The Ontario Welfare Story

From 1966 to 1995, SA was administered in Canada via the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), an arrangement whereby SA eligibility was premised on need and entitlement. In 1995, however CAP was eliminated by the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer, allocating federal block grants to the provinces; giving more say to provincial governments in the design and administration of SA, but less funding. Similar to the public campaigns in the United States decrying the exorbitant price tag attached to the SA system, the Ontario Government, under the leadership of former Premier Mike Harris, slashed SA rates (by 21.6 percent) and introduced Ontario Works (OW). Under the Social Assistance Reform Act (1997) SA in Ontario was divided into two streams: Ontario Works, providing employment and monetary assistance for the able-bodied participant, and the Ontario Disability Support Program, for those with a recognized
disability. OW is delivered through service agencies in conjunction with municipal governments. The Ontario Works Act of 1997 (replacing the General Welfare Act) was highly influenced by Wisconsin Works in the US (Herd, 2002). Unlike our American counterparts, SA was not limited to families with children (as under AFDC but extended under TANF) but was made available to all individuals demonstrating need within the confined eligibility criteria. As a result, literature from the United States primarily focuses its research on the lone mother family structure type. The Canadian literature may direct significant attention to this population as a result of being highly influenced by American research but also due to the fact that of all family types lone mothers have been particularly prone to SA receipt. For example, 40 percent of all lone mothers received SA in 1998, the highest rate of all family structure types (Kapsalis & Tourigny, 2002).

Through OW, the work-for-welfare approach was adopted focused principally on employability and job readiness, promoting the shortest route to a job in a residual SA system that considers state assistance only as last resort (Gazso, 2009a). Expressly articulated,

The purpose of the Act is to ensure a program that:
(a) recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self reliance through employment;
(b) provides temporary financial assistance to those most in need while they satisfy obligations to become and stay employed;
(c) effectively serves people needing assistance; and
(d) is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario (Government of Ontario, Ontario Works Act, c. 25, Sched. A, s. 1, emphasis added).

Unequivocally the purpose of SA in Ontario is to “recognize individual responsibility and promote(s) self reliance through employment” (Government of Ontario, Ontario Works Act, 1997). A mechanism of OW aimed at developing individual responsibility and self reliance is through various workfare measures. Through OW, participants are eligible for two types of assistance: basic financial assistance (for basic needs and shelter) and employment assistance. Employment assistance is

 to help a person to become and stay employed and includes,
(a) community participation; and
(b) other employment measures, as prescribed (Government of Ontario, 1997, Ontario Works Act, c. 25, Sched. A, s. 4).

Financial assistance was to be administered with conditions attached; participants were obligated to become job ready (via ‘employment assistance’ measures such as résumé-writing workshops), find employment (‘any job is a good job’) or ‘volunteer’ in the community if they were unable to find (paid) work immediately. As Peck (2001) alleges, “Workfare is not about creating jobs for people who don’t have them; it is about creating workers for jobs that nobody wants (p. 6, as cited in Evans, 2009).

At such time, OW effectively redefined mothers as able-bodied workers, a group that was previously excluded from the worker category under the former SA regime.

Doing nothing on welfare is no longer an option. Participation is not just an expectation, but a requirement. In order to receive financial assistance, people on welfare must, learn, train, find work, or contribute to their communities. Participation is mandatory for all able-bodied people, including sole-support parents with school-aged children (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2001).

Unpaid work in the home was no longer deemed ‘work’ in Canada, privileging the stay at home mother (dependent on her husband for economic sustenance) with a narrative valorizing her priority to her children while constructing the lone mother on SA to be lazy and unproductive.

In the present neoliberal era, the worker-citizen subjectivity has been cultivated (Pollack & Caragata, 2010); a subjectivity privileging market values: individualism, competition, independence and self-sufficiency. Bezanson (2006c) refers to the process of elevating the citizen worker while devaluing the citizen carer (no more permitting the lone mother on SA to stay at home with their children) as defamilialization; a process that has developed hand-in-hand with refamilialization, positioning the work of social reproduction (labour associated with the maintenance and reproduction of people) as under personal and familial charge, outside of the state’s responsibility and therefore not requiring public assistance (legitimizing the retrenchment of the social safety net). The construction of the neoliberal market citizen is unfettered by caregiving demands, assuming that caregiving needs are taken care of to allow the citizen to fully
participate in the labour market (Gazso, 2009a). The supposition of self sufficiency is therefore misleading as no one is entirely self sufficient—individuals are interdependent. The unpaid work done at home and in the community continues to be organized primarily by women (the female carer), even while the shift to a dual-earner model pervades, but with fewer state supports (Bezanson, 2006b).

The definition of spouse was also amended with the introduction of OW inviting the policing (and potential abuse) of SA participants in their intimate relationships. A ‘spouse in the house’ could be deemed financially responsible for the inhabitants of the household, causing participants to be ineligible for SA (Mosher, Evans & Little, 2004). Co-residency thus inferred spousal status, making lone mothers economically dependent on men who had no legal obligation to provide for them (Mosher & Hermer, 2005). So while legislating that lone mothers could no longer be ‘dependent’ on the state they could be put in a position of being ‘dependent’ on a ‘partner’ (possibly a roommate or friend).

Mitchell, Lightman and Herd (2007) argue that individualistic explanations are given for poverty in Ontario that of moral failings, dependency and poor work habits. As such, being poor is to be considered of one’s own making—and people are blamed for it (Mosher & Hermer, 2005, 2010). The ‘passive’ SA system was thus changed, focusing on ‘active’ policies that would connect individuals to the labour force (Cooke & Gazso, 2009a; Evans, 2009). No more could people expect ‘to get something for nothing’, participants were to be considered accountable to the ‘honest taxpayer’ and subject to moral condemnation. As a result, the Conservative Government advanced social constructions that SA participants were thieves, cheats, prone to fraud and criminal (Mosher & Hermer, 2010). In such a context, SA workers demanded excessive information from participants under rigid monitoring requirements and surveillance (i.e. home visits, repetitive requests for lengthy documentation) (Herd & Mitchell, 2002; Herd, Mitchell & Lightman, 2005) in the one-size-fits-all program (Mitchell, Lightman & Herd, 2007) known to stigmatize and demean participants.

One key objective of OW was to eliminate fraud as “those on social assistance, the far majority of them women and children, are widely viewed as morally suspect persons, criminals
in waiting poised to abuse a public expenditure and trust” (Mosher & Hermer, 2005, p. 6). SA participants were thus placed under greater scrutiny than individuals suspect for crimes of tax evasion or employee standards violations (Mosher & Hermer, 2005) in a system set up with countless complex rules such that any errors or unavoidable, unintended violations were constructed as fraud (Mosher & Hermer, 2010). The famous Kimberly Rogers case demonstrated how accessing student loans while in SA receipt was deemed to be fraud, even while pursuing a college education would likely have leveraged her economic position in the future (and a shift off SA). Ms. Rogers died eight months pregnant while under house arrest in 2001 (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002).

SA fraud was declared to be pervasive although actual convictions represented only 0.1 percent of caseload (in 2001-02), while over 38,000 investigations were undertaken (Mosher & Hermer, 2005). Those convicted were subject to lifetime ban from SA and/or incarceration even in cases less than $5000 (the policy in relation to the lifetime ban however was later dismissed). A toll free hotline (‘snitch line’) was also established and government officials solicited incriminating information on SA participants from friends, family members and neighbours. However, as Mosher and Hermer (2010) argue, “fighting fraud has little to do with governing crime and more to do with a systematic attempt to disenfranchise and punish a highly vulnerable and easily stigmatized population who dare seek assistance from the state” (p. 48).

Over time, employment has become increasingly precarious, with the rise of temporary, seasonal, part time employment (Evans, 2009; Vosko, 2006), a reality SA policies neglect. Women figure prominently in non-standard employment, often working multiple jobs to make ends meet despite the systemic barriers (i.e. inadequate childcare support), sexism and unequal access to “good” jobs—not McJobs—jobs that no one wants and do not provide an adequate living wage (Gazso, 2009a). Notwithstanding, the complete inadequacy of SA benefits has meant mothers have had to discover resourceful ways to get by i.e. accessing multiple food banks (Baker Collins, Neysmith, Porter & Reitsma-Street, 2009), sometimes compromising their own nutrition for the sake of their children (Evans, 2009). While lone mothers have witnessed higher employment rates over the last decade, unsurprising given the thriving economy over the past several years (which may be losing pace due to the recent recession), Evans (2009) finds their
economic disadvantage in paid work remains, meaning that once expenses are paid, women are no better off or worse off in paid work than on SA. This is the context in Ontario today where SA participants are constrained to being part of the working poor or being poor on SA.

3.13 Literature on SA Participation

To assuage the ‘out-of-wedlock’ teen mother (An, Haveman & Wolfe, 1993; Duncan & Hoffman, 1990) ‘crisis’ (Miranne & Young, 2002), American literature on SA from the 1960s through the 1990s is normally fixated on the welfare dependency premise targeting lone mothers for scrutiny (Skevik, 2005). Unequivocally, SA is gendered and racialized, given that “the problem is far more serious among blacks than among whites” (An et al., 1993, p. 195). An et al. (1993) note that one out of every twelve girls in 1990 “became pregnant out-of-wedlock and half of them carried the pregnancy to term” (p. 195). Accordingly, the authors affirm their concern that the problem unchecked will continue in a repetitive spiral into future generations. At the same time however, An et al. (1993) observe that the probability of a teen giving birth ‘out-of-wedlock’ receiving benefits is negatively correlated to the financial status of the family in which she was raised, and positively correlated to her mother’s prior participation in SA, as well as the geographic neighbourhood (for example, in a more economically unstable region) of the girl’s family during childhood. These findings suggest that while there may be a relationship between a mother and her child’s propensity to access the SA system, the concentration of poverty within neighbourhoods also factors into the equation.

The ‘teen out-of-wedlock’ phenomenon has been a particularly alarming issue for policy-makers in the United States (Miranne & Young, 2002), and as a result, in the welfare reform policy (PRWORA) teen mothers (ages 18 and under) were mandated to live with their parents, while maintaining full time school attendance in order to receive SA benefits. School sexual education programs focused on abstinence education were promoted, precluding any discussions about birth control or family planning, even while 80 percent of individuals experience sexual intercourse by age 20 (Miranne & Young, 2002). Accordingly, federally funded financial incentives were set aside to award the five highest states demonstrating the highest reductions to their abortion rate. Be that as it may, teen parents have only comprised a small proportion of the overall welfare rolls at any given time, although 55 percent of welfare
participants were single women who had given birth as teenagers. In addition, Miranne and Young (2002) note the proclivity to label teen mothers within the ‘at-risk’ discourse, a deficit model of behaviour which focuses on monitoring and policing young mothers rather than focusing on the context of their lives and how the implementation of welfare measures impact them. As such, the contexts of sexual deviancy and at-risk behaviour deliberated within welfare discussions are directed at specific “geography, notably poor, urban communities” (Miranne & Young, 2002, p. 366).

Since the inception of the British Poor Laws (Piven & Cloward, 1971), researchers have debated the merits and drawbacks of a generous welfare system. Moffitt (1981, 1992, 2002, 2003), as with Lindbeck (1995), claimed that the generosity of welfare systems pose a significant disincentive to work for the unemployed. Moffitt (1992) points to the feminization of poverty as being a direct consequence of families accessing the SA system. His main premise rested on the assertion that it was socially undesirable to have rising female-headed households (where poverty was most profound) vis-à-vis dual parent families. Moffitt (1992) therefore considered whether the SA system reduced labour supply, encouraged long term dependency and increased marital breakup and illegitimacy (sic). While Moffitt (1992) claimed that welfare dependence was the result of a generous welfare system, he nonetheless recognized that conclusive evidence, rather than the speculative research which he offered, was needed to make this claim.

Opposition to a generous SA regime is particularly prevalent in the writings of theorists worried that specific sectors of the population are ‘at risk’ of out-of-wedlock (sic) births, engendered by the notion that teen mothers are lured into pregnancy by ‘generous’ SA benefits. A study by Duncan and Hoffman (1990), however, found only weak evidence that would support this proposition. The authors found that women who do not perceive themselves as holding future marital and career opportunities are more apt to have children during their teen years given the conclusion that they have nothing to lose by having them. This was particularly the case for Black mothers more so than their White counterparts. Hence, offering future opportunities to potential (Black) mothers was deemed essential to decrease the incidence of teen births and generate better economic prospects for teens in the future.
As noted, Lindbeck (1995) and Moffit (1981, 1992) speculate that higher SA rates inevitably propel individuals to leave the ranks of the employed into dependence on the welfare rolls. Accordingly, decreases in SA benefits would result in a deflated SA caseload, and conversely, increases would result in the swelling of the rolls. In this vein, Canadian researchers Lemieux and Milligan (2006) utilized a regression discontinuity approach which revealed “strong evidence that more generous social assistance benefits reduce employment” (p. 4). However, their study only comprised less-educated men, ages 29-30, and therefore, does not adequately demonstrate this phenomenon across neoliberal countries (particularly in the United States where men are not eligible for SA benefits) and to other segments of the SA population (in particular, mothers with dependent children).

What is more, Christofides, Stengos and Swidinsky (1997) find evidence that would contradict this finding. Christofides et al.’s (1997) study did not find statistically significant evidence that cutbacks to SA benefits result in caseload reductions. The authors used a bivariate probit estimation model using the Labour Market Activity Survey (LMAS) in Canada. Results of the study indicate that whilst decreasing the generosity of the welfare system would yield lower program costs, the authors do not find statistical significance that reductions in welfare benefits spurred a drop in the welfare rolls. The authors suggest that administrative changes and fluctuations in the labour market may be the key contributors to the caseload decline of the 1990s, rather than the curbed (perceived) generosity of SA benefits (Christofides et al., 1997). Hence, this study points to incongruence in the notion that generosity of welfare benefits yields higher SA usage, and conversely, that a reduction in SA amounts would ultimately lead to a reduction in caseloads.

“The bodies we occupy matter” (Butler, 1993, as cited in Saraga, 1998, p. 93). Lewis (1998) argues that the bodies we occupy and the labels which become attached to them, offer a means of (hierarchal) categorization which provide meaning, belonging, and status to specific groups. Identities are created via a blending of individual and collective histories. Adhering to the social constructivist lens, bodies ought not to be biologically understood, but recognized as cultural artifacts, both expressing and reflecting social relations. Accordingly, race, albeit appearing to be a product of nature or natural, is a means for a socially constructed ordering of dominant and subordinate locations (Lewis, 1998). The study undertaken will expose the racial,
gendered and classist constructions in Ontario’s workfare system. This discussion is vital given that researchers rarely offer in-depth analyses of the intersectionality of SA participants (see Collins, 1998; Roberts, 1996). Absent, as well, are studies focusing on the broader systemic barriers which influence individuals’ propensity to enter and leave the SA system.

Unlike other researchers blind to systemic issues, British researcher Plant’s (1984) study attempted to unearth evidence that would indicate whether SA usage is affected by poverty as a structural phenomenon vis-à-vis the notion that SA is addictive and induces participants into welfare dependence. If the latter held true, a diminished SA system would inevitably shorten the length of stay for SA participants. Plant (1984) questioned the existence of a ‘welfare trap’ in order to ascertain whether more generous welfare provisions would lessen the economic incentives to work. If this was found to be the case, he might conclude that “…the government should limit the length of families’ eligibility so they do not become entrapped into dependence on the government’s generosity” (p. 683). In the starting premise of the article, the author does not take the traditional dependency stance, demonstrated in his recognition that poverty may indeed be a structural phenomenon. As such, Plant (1984) did not discover evidence supporting the existence of a welfare trap, leading to his resolve that policy-makers ought to concern themselves with the social structures which bind the poor in persistent low earnings, rather than pursue investments in funding strategies having to do with short term disincentives to work (with the welfare system seen as the key culprit).

Duncan, Hill and Hoffman (1988) also explore the existence of ‘welfare dependence’ in their discussion of the growing ‘underclass’ and mounting poverty, impacting children in particular. The authors use a longitudinal study in order to examine whether the SA system plays a causal role in creating ‘welfare dependence’ or whether SA is used for short periods, as insurance against short term income losses. Evidence from their study indicates the latter, a vast majority of SA experiences are short lived, resulting from periods of employment volatility. Equally important, the authors found that children growing up in homes where parents accessed SA were not more likely to become reliant on the system as adults. The majority of participants in the sample did not share the same fate as their parents who had encountered the SA system; only twenty percent (one in five) of their sample participants from ‘highly dependent’ (sic) families (it is unknown whether these were one or two parent families) themselves accessed SA
in their 20s. The authors suggest that “the welfare dependence of these daughters as adults is affected by factors other than the welfare dependence of their parents, but, as yet, more elaborate attempts to estimate the extent to which welfare dependence is transmitted between generations controlling for other factors have been inconclusive” (Duncan et al., 1988, p. 470). While there does appear a small minority of individuals who persistently utilize SA, on the whole, individuals generally access the system for short intervals during periods of economic instability. In conclusion, the authors posit that “taken together, this evidence suggests that the welfare system does not foster reliance on welfare so much as it acts as insurance against temporary misfortune” (p. 471).

Again in Duncan and Hoffman’s (1990) study raised earlier, the authors highlight the increased proportion of children being raised ‘out-of-wedlock’ to teen mothers, implying that the growing trend indicates a rising crisis, presenting “large risks to both child and the mother” (Duncan & Hoffman, 1990, p. 519). For children, these risks include possible health and cognitive impairments, as well as the disadvantages of a childhood lived in poverty. Mothers, the authors explain, are more at risk of squandering future career and marital opportunities. As noted, however, the authors suggest that offering opportunities to mothers would likely decrease the incidence of teen births and generate better economic prospects for teens than a focus on reductions in SA benefit levels (Duncan & Hoffman, 1990).

A number of studies have tested the intergenerational transmission of SA access hypothesis. Pepper (1995) decided to examine the conclusion that growing up in a household receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (the legislation in effect prior to welfare reform’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF]), substantially increases the probability of a child in that household receiving AFDC in the future (the intergenerational transmission of welfare usage hypothesis). However, Pepper’s (1995) American study did not yield conclusive results. The author acknowledges that it was unclear as to whether the SA transmission of study participants was due to observed intergenerational correlations or artifacts of unobserved factors. This lack of clarity resulted from the statistical difficulty of attempting to disentangle the shared attributes of mother and child (neighbourhood, socio-economic status, educational opportunities, lack of job prospects, etc.) from the causal mechanism, the correlation
based on the mother’s prior SA participation. This difficulty is also confirmed in Gottschaulk’s (1996) study.

Gottschalk (1996) also endeavoured to establish an intergenerational correlation between SA participation of mothers with their daughters. Like Pepper (1995), the author conceded that an observed correlation (causal link) was difficult to isolate from correlated unobservables such as geographic neighbourhoods, housing poor schools, weak job prospects (variables encountered by both mother and daughter). Gottschaulk (1996) therefore concluded that if a causal link was established, policies ought to be instituted to reduce SA participation (and in so doing, future SA receipt). Conversely, if the link was not causal, then these policies would remain ineffectual as they would not tackle the root causes of welfare participation. While Gottschaulk (1996) ascertained that mother and daughter’s SA participation was correlated, he was unclear as to whether this correlation was spurious, the correlation may have had more to do with the unobservable factors (job opportunities, similar preferences, etc.) than with a causal link in the intergenerational transmission of SA usage. As acknowledged earlier, the spurious nature of the correlation points to the difficulty in isolating the effects of unobservable factors at play in the analysis and the complexity of identifying the routes by which a potential causal link is established. While the author found an intergenerational correlation between SA participation among the non-Black population of SA participants, the correlation was found to be spurious for the American Black population. This finding suggests that while SA usage may be more causal in nature for the non-Black population, shared effects may be more substantial contributors to the transmission of SA usage for the Black population of the United States. The spurious nature of the correlation would indicate that other factors are at play; dynamics which commonly remain unnamed, captured in quantitative terms such as ‘spurious’, ‘unobserved heterogeneity’ or ‘exogenous’, even while these factors remain exceedingly important in explaining SA usage.

One of the key advocates of welfare reform, Blank (1989; 2006), questioned the success of welfare reforms once ostensibly realized by 2000, asserting that,

We don’t know how to adequately specify the synergies that happened when all of these policy and economic changes pushed in one direction and were matched with a strong public message that welfare was going to be much less available in the future and work was going to be the only choice for the long term” (Blank, 2006, p. 3-4).
While recognizing that caseloads were reduced dramatically (the manifest intent of welfare reform), it is unclear whether welfare reform was the main impetus for individuals to leave the system. Blank (2006) contemplated whether the economic boom of the 1990s might have played a larger role in these reductions. Although more women were found to be working during this time than was the case prior to the reform measures, they are experiencing new depths of poverty not witnessed before their introduction (Orloff, 2002).

Specific observed and unobserved characteristics correlated between parents and their children are therefore at play in explaining the intergenerational transmission of SA. In the extant literature, the observed correlation is said to derive from two disparate sources: first, the potential causal link between parent SA participation and child participation—a natural reproduction of the parent SA model by their children; and second, a correlation between parents’ environmental characteristics impacting their child’s proclivity to participate in SA. The neighbourhood of residence, level of education, work opportunities, common values and perceptions regarding work (An et al., 1992), etc. constitute a ‘shared determinants effect’ which may affect the probability of the child accessing SA (Beaulieu et al., 2005).

The presence of the observed causal link found in SA studies (Beaulieu et al., 2005; An et al., 1993; Pepper, 1995; Gottschalk, 1996) is explained by two sources. Parents’ participation may reduce the stigma (Moffit, 1983) experienced by children accessing SA, thereby reducing a reluctance or distaste to use the program, referred to by Antel (1992) as ‘stigma attenuation’. This explanation is considered a ‘conformity effect’. According to some authors (Beaulieu et al., 2005; An et al., 1993; Pepper, 1995; Gottschalk, 1996), the child may exhibit a heightened interest in SA participation during his/her pre-adult life in order to replicate family behaviour. Correspondingly, longer durations of time spent on SA or a greater intensity of SA use strengthens the force of the conformity effect (Beaulieu et al. 2005).

The second explanation for an observed causal link is afforded by two terms in the literature, the ‘learning effect’ and ‘informational effect’. Participants already informed of how to access the system may show their child/ren how to use SA efficiently, providing an informational effect. Consequently, children may learn how to navigate or “play the system”
(Antel, 1992, p. 468) by parents who have previously accessed SA, a ‘learning effect’. The learning effect then assists children by lowering their participation costs as they grow up, which in turn, influences them to access SA. The greater the intensity of the SA use, the greater the force of these effects. Furthermore, given a parent’s status as a SA participant and decreased interactions with the labour market, parents are less equipped to present their child/ren with opportunities to hone job search skills and can offer fewer contacts (or social capital); networks which are so critical to providing potential information and influence in employment prospects (Antel, 1992; Beaulieu et al., 2005).

It is noteworthy that the learning and informational effects associated with other processes of socialization and learning receive a wholly different account vis-à-vis the mainstream welfare literature. Generally, when individuals’ experience learning and informational effects, these effects tend to be regarded as attributes of positive development in acquiring particular knowledge or skill set. In contradistinction, in the literature pertaining to social assistance these effects are depicted to be dangerous by increasing one’s knowledge of the welfare system.

Much of the mainstream literature on welfare dependency is American (Duncan & Yeung, 1995; Lanahan, 1988; Moffit, 1983; Solon, Corcoran, Gordon, & Laren, 1988), but cited extensively by Canadian researchers. The propensity to rely on quantitative studies in the United States poses a significant cause for concern given the wide array of differences between American and Canadian approaches to social welfare. In fact, it is doubtful that the United States may be considered a welfare state at all. Indeed, the designs of welfare distribution are as different as the states that profess to confer it (Orloff, 2009). In many European countries, for example, welfare distribution is frequently linked to issues of poverty and employment, particularly in terms of the kinds of job available to visible immigrant groups. Nevertheless, in much of the welfare literature in countries of the North, not only are lone mothers portrayed as welfare dependent, but this dependence is postulated to be intergenerational in nature (Antel, 1992; Solon et al., 1988), that welfare users give rise to new generations of welfare users in an endless cycle of dependency, regardless of the polity, geographic location or policy context. Hence, conservative think-tanks, the media and policy makers in Canada take up the
ideologically resolute racially and gendered discourses from the US, whether or not they align with the Canadian experience.

There are few Canadian studies which empirically examine welfare dependency by analyzing women’s spells in and out of the system (Barrett & Cragg, 1998; Fortin, Lacroix & Thibault, 1999; Stewart & Dooley, 1999), and only one study on the intergenerational transmission of SA usage (Beaulieu, Duclos, Fortin & Rouleau, 2005); although its existence is widely touted by politicians and accepted in the mainstream cultural milieu. Sceviour and Finnie (2004) assert that after 1995, almost all of the provinces embarked on changes “aimed at reducing welfare dependency” (p. 31).

In 2005, Beaulieu, Duclos, Fortin and Rouleau claimed to offer the first paper to analyze the intergenerational transmission of welfare usage in Canada using a bivariate probit model. Using administrative records in Quebec from 1979 to 1990, the authors (2005) found a causal link between parents and children’s participation in the SA system: “the average, at least a one-percentage unit increase in parental participation during the youth’s pre-adult years (age 7-17) raises the youth’s participation rate by 0.29 percentage unit during early adulthood (age 18-21)” (Beaulieu et al., 2005, p. 539). The authors point to two factors which impact the observed intergenerational correlation between parent and child SA participation. First, a conformity effect: participation of parents in the program may reduce the stigma felt by children in relation to the SA system, and thereby minimize their reluctance to access the system. Second, a learning effect: children learn from their parents how to navigate the system. These unobserved correlations impact the propensity of children’s participation, including shared characteristics (a shared-determinants effect) which, as outlined earlier, may comprise such variables as: similar levels of education; motivation to work; neighbourhoods; value systems, and perceptions shared between parent and child (improving the socio-economic characteristics and environmental factors which effect SA participation would effectively combat the shared determinants effect) (Beaulieu et al., 2005).
As noted, Beaulieu et al.’s (2005) study found some evidence of a significant causal intergenerational link between parental and child usage of SA. While a causal link between parent and child was found, again it was unclear how much of the propensity of intergenerational SA participation was attributable to a causal link of intergenerational transmission as distinct from the causal transmission of poverty and/or poor employment episodes. Consequently, the authors recognize the need for heightened income security policies which would impact the current generation, recognizing that changes made to the current market may also have lasting effects for future generations (Beaulieu et al., 2005).

Most econometric studies have negated the impact of the unemployment insurance (UI) system on welfare usage, prompting a study by Fortin, Lacroix and Thibault (1999). In their study, Fortin et al. (1999) reveal that the tightening of conditions of eligibility of Unemployment Insurance (UI) in Quebec caused a reduction of exits from SA (especially for older groups) and increased re-entries onto SA. Conversely, a cut in the UI replacement rate raises the rate of re-entry onto the SA system. Therefore, cuts to the UI program may explain some of the increase in SA participation witnessed by lone mothers from 1989 to 1992 (Fortin et al., 1999). Why individuals are forced to enter the SA system at all must be questioned. What is taking place in broader society, particularly the labour market, must feature more prominently in the Canadian welfare story.

Stewart and Dooley (1999) set out to test whether a welfare trap (intergenerational transmission of SA) exists. To this end, the authors found mixed evidence that a welfare trap exists in Canada. In their 1999 study, Stewart and Dooley observed that increased months of SA access during past spells were associated with both longer future spells on SA, and shorter spells off SA (although the magnitude of both effects was small). There was a decline in exit rates from off-welfare spells during the 12 months following an exit from SA however. Welfare spells were longer for lone mothers who were younger, poorly educated, never married, not employable and for those with many young children. Moreover, the authors found that spell lengths on SA rise with a higher unemployment rate, while off welfare spells were longer with a higher minimum wage (Stewart & Dooley, 1999). This finding leads to the conclusion that the structural impacts of the minimum wage and rate of unemployment play a role in mitigating SA usage.
Stewart and Dooley (1999) found the presence of both negative duration dependence, meaning that the likelihood of leaving SA declines as spells get longer, and negative lagged duration, current spells are longer for participants who have more total months on SA prior to the current spell. The presence of duration dependence would suggest the presence of a ‘welfare trap’ adversely affecting participants’ ability to leave the system. While a declining exit rate is required for there to be a welfare trap, Contini and Negri (2007) have argued that a declining hazard can exist even in the absence of duration dependence because it may be time in unemployment or poverty, rather than time on SA, that generates the decline in exits. Cooke (2009) aptly points out that these trajectories are interconnected and because data on the onset of poverty is limited, it is difficult to isolate their effects independently.

Barrett and Cragg (1998) assert that time off of SA reveals much about how welfare provisions are used in Canada. In their study using data from British Columbia, the authors ascertained that 55 percent of SA participants who left the system returned after the first year. Indeed, 65 percent returned within two years and a full 72 percent returned within four years. Hence, while finding that individuals (both men and women) generally do not stay on the welfare rolls for long periods (generally less than six months at a stretch), the authors found that they also had a high turnover rate, cycling in and out of welfare as the need arose. While long term sporadic use is exceedingly common, Barrett and Cragg (1998) found that long term receipt of welfare is not typical for the majority of SA participants, leading them to claim that “welfare dependence defined in terms of remaining on welfare for a long period of time, does not accurately characterize their experience on welfare” (Barrett & Cragg, 1998, p. 186). There does appear to be a population which access SA over extended periods, this population comprises only 10 percent of participants (accessing SA for periods longer than a year). Accordingly, the other 90 percent of participants do not access SA for periods longer than a year, and therefore, cannot be considered chronically dependent on the receipt of SA. These findings point to a serious fissure in the dependency hypothesis which would promote a view of SA participants as being unremittingly addicted to the welfare system.

Regularly, those who do exit the system generally obtain seasonal, part time and contract positions (Evans, 2007), becoming part of the working poor or tied to abusive relationships.
where there are virtually no attempts to capture their outcomes statistically or acknowledge the breadwinner model of citizen which consistently reinforces the barriers that confront women. For example, the presence of school aged children also substantially increases the probability of participation (Frenette & Picot, 2003). To seek redress of this issue, Charette and Meng (1994) suggest that employment support programs, like enhanced child care services for lone mothers, would significantly affect SA usage.

Furthermore, Barrett and Cragg (1998) reveal that across all demographic groups repeat use (cycling) or recidivism is quite high, with the presence of children in the family unit, the rate is higher still. The authors therefore suggest that current arrangements do not afford the necessary supports that would enable families to extricate themselves from the system over the long haul, forcing individuals to resort to SA receipt as a strategy (one of many) to survive. Hence, despite public opinion that SA participants are chronically ‘dependent’ on the system, Barrett and Cragg (1998) find otherwise. SA participants are chronically poor, cycling in and out of SA even as they cycle in and out of a precarious job market, relying on seasonal, contract and temporary employment between welfare spells (Evans, 2007). In this case, SA usage appears to be employed more as a survival strategy rather than a chronic lifestyle. However, SA use, indeed, welfare dependency is planted centre stage, even though individuals generally access SA for only short periods, while drawing on a myriad of supports and resources to make ends meet (as per the social provisioning literature, see for example, Baker Collins, Neysmith, Porter & Reitsma-Street, 2009; Donath, 2000; Neysmith & Reitsma-Street, 2005; Power, 2004).

A study by Cooke (2009) finds that women’s previous employment experience and education are less significant predictors of SA exit than is women’s prior marital history. The author thus suggests that the welfare reform measures were not only geared towards promoting SA exit through waged labour, but also through marriage, reflected in the aptly coined term ‘wedfare’ (Cooke, 2009). Indeed, a study by Frenette and Picot (2003) confirm that marriage and divorce play key roles in determining the odds of leaving the system and in reaching higher levels of economic well-being off SA. Married women or women who have been married have a lower probability of SA participation relative to women that have never been married, whilst women separated, divorced, abandoned or widowed have a higher probability of SA access. While married men who divorced are more likely to exit the system, the opposite was found to
be true for women—women are more likely to stay on the system after divorce. This is principally due to the fact that men have better post-divorce financial outcomes vis-à-vis women. In the study 35 percent of those who left the system after one year returned, with one half returning, at some point, within five years. Those who returned did so for sporadic spells and only 13 percent returned for a full year within leaving the system. According to this analysis then, only 13 percent access SA somewhat persistently (if persistent can be defined as a full year of access), while a full 87 percent of individuals are not ‘chronically dependent’ and do not require assistance for longer than a year. Additionally, if 50 percent of SA participants return at some point in five years, the other half does not return at all. Half of the caseload comprises first time users who never return. Although over half of SA participants did not return to the welfare rolls, many of them have not acquired better paying jobs that would significantly improve their economic situation (Frenette & Picot, 2003). Where is the thorough discussion of this important finding? Moreover, what are the reasons for the half that do return? In reality, the fact that all individuals leave the system, albeit for brief periods, reveals that individuals do not utilize SA for the continuous, uninterrupted periods of time suggested by the dependency supposition. Thus, it is exceedingly important to illuminate how theorists choose to highlight particular statistics, at the expense of others, which are as a matter of course minimized or ignored, to ensure that the welfare dependency supposition is maintained.

To illustrate how the welfare dependency discourse fails in its depiction of SA participants, it is necessary to consider how SA distribution is regarded within the spectrum of welfare entitlements. For example, employment insurance and the Canadian Pension Plan are benefits deemed to be entitlements of deserving, hard working individuals. At the same time, the second tier of welfare distribution, the social assistance system, is intended for the undeserving (Gazso, 2009b) and was designed to shame those perceived to be lazy, accompanied by ‘dependent’ status (Fraser & Gordon, 1994), regardless of the amount of time one receives SA, or more importantly, the reasons behind individuals’ need to access the system.

Given the lengthy and complicated application processes associated with SA programs (Herd & Mitchell, 2003; Herd, Mitchell & Lightman, 2005), it is likely that a portion of SA participants are not appropriately placed in OW vis-à-vis the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). While ODSP is given a slightly more respectable status, the process to gain entry into
the program is quite arduous (requiring verification of a health condition by a medical doctor, for example). If individuals are coping with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, or mental health issues, it is possible that they may enter the OW program, even while they are more suited for the ODSP program. Without the appropriate resources to assist in the exigent application process, however, they may enter OW only to cycle through the system more persistently than most other SA participants. Two important issues surface from this phenomenon. First, the multiple intersections of SA participants (including determinants of health) are exceedingly important to observe, particularly in how these intersections play out in the daily lives of SA participants, and the structural barriers which offer the rationale for why individuals enter/exit SA. In a similar vein, the ‘reality’ experienced by SA participants may vary greatly from the welfare dependency discourse and the social constructions manufactured to depict participants, maintaining the notion that the SA population is homogeneous, and that all are chronic ‘users’ of the system.

Indisputably, the proportion of SA participants declined in Canada in the 1990s. Still, researchers are unclear as to whether this decline was the result of the massive reduction of SA benefits, tighter eligibility rules (Herd et al., 2005), the new definition of spouse (in Ontario) or the economic rebound witnessed in most provinces at the time. Regardless of the cause of the decline, however, individuals with the lowest incomes who left the welfare rolls at that time have seen their economic position deteriorate considerably. A recent study by Richards (2010) of the C.D. Howe Institute espouses the welfare dependency paradigm, asserting that the main cause of the Canadian caseload decline in the 1990s was a result of curbing the erstwhile generous (sic) benefits to make SA participants cognizant of their need to work. While Richards acknowledges that favourable labour market conditions played a role in the decline, he puts greater emphasis on the ‘tough love’ social policy reforms adopted in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Akin to US researchers, the author discusses how siphoning SA participants off benefits permits the “independence” of households from governmental regulations; increases children’s chances of completing high school while avoiding teen pregnancy; and “induces a more active lifestyle than that associated with reliance on transfer income” (Richards, 2010, p. 6). SA dependence, he points out, increases psychological depression and increased rates of self-destructive behaviour, including suicide (particularly in the males). While Richards notes that SA participation
dwindled in the 1990s, poverty has remained relatively static by low-income measures (LIM), with many former SA participants simply joining the ranks of the working poor. In a rebuff to Richard’s (2010) report, Yalnizyan retorts that “when there are jobs, people take them” and “it would have been surprising if single mothers hadn’t increased their market incomes during a decade of remarkable economic expansion, when Canada’s rate of job creation was unmatched among the world’s rich nations” (as cited in Goar, 2010). As such, favourable economic conditions and a high employment rate likely had more to do with people leaving the rolls than did the social policy reforms.

As demonstrated by the research in the studies identified, the proclivity of individuals to be ‘welfare dependent’ (which, must more appropriately refer to cycling on and off the system as opposed to chronic access) ought to be linked to broader structural impacts such as the unemployment rate, minimum wage, employment insurance system and adequate child care provisions, to observe how the wider environment and conglomeration of socio-political factors impinge upon individuals’ ability to find and maintain employment over the long term. Indeed, the discourse on SA participation must also be framed by discussions on the host of work activities not readily captured when addressing participation in waged labour (i.e. the informal provisioning work of women), while exposing and discrediting disparaging constructions of lone mothers fostered by the welfare dependency paradigm.

The necessity of individuals to be part of the ‘waged’ labour force at all must be questioned. The new social movements (i.e. Beneria, 1992, 1995; Lind, 1997, 2005; Naples, 1992, 1998; Robnett, 2002; Taylor, 1999, 2004; Whittier, 2002) and social provisioning literatures (i.e. Baker Collins et al., 2009; Donath, 2000; Neysmith & Reitsma-Street, 2005; Power, 2004) would argue that women are engaged in myriad forms of labour, inside and outside waged employment. The depth and breadth of their activities are not captured in the mainstream literature which has chastised lone mothers for their apparent idleness, even while they ceaselessly juggle multifarious demands—albeit with few resources—to get by.

Cooke (2009) takes a life course perspective to observe trends in SA usage declaring that welfare dependency is invalid in its representation of the SA system. Given that the term is utilized to refer to SA access over the long term, studies confirm that access tends to be short
term and sporadic (Barrett & Cragg, 1998; Cooke, 2009; Duclos, Fortin, Lacroix, & Roberge, 1999) indicating that its present usage is fundamentally flawed. A life course framework therefore offers a more useful way of recognizing how programs and services within the social safety net are structured to enforce normalized expected events within the life cycle. In North America, women are contemporaneously viewed as potential workers, even though essential services, such as childcare, have not been instituted to permit their seamless incorporation into the workforce outside of a (dual income) marriage partnership. Hence, bearing children in one’s early years or parenting outside of marriage (Miranne & Young, 2002) is not systemically encouraged.

The life course perspective is also helpful in illuminating how ‘workers’ transition in and out of employment throughout the life course. Individuals are not expected to be engaged in waged labour during specific points in life (i.e. childhood, after retirement) even though the term ‘welfare dependency’ reflects a static state of duration dependence, a notion which quite clearly, does not readily capture the transitions of the life course or the sporadic and temporary nature of current SA receipt (Cooke, 2009).

While the literature has tended to weigh heavily on the negative characteristics of adolescent motherhood, a body of literature is emerging which points to myriad positive aspects of parenting at a young age. Wilson and Huntington (2005) remark that there are mounting studies which discuss how adolescent mothering contributes to positive life changes, witnessed in conquering drug and alcohol addictions; improved self-esteem; a sense of purpose and direction; reconnecting with families; and augmented levels of enjoyment and satisfaction realized as a result of motherhood. Moreover, the process of having a baby, mothers claim, fosters new heights of independence and/or adult responsibilities (Wilson & Huntington, 2005). Therefore, the ideological motivation to thwart the teen out-of-wedlock crisis (and maintain the traditional nuclear [male headed] family) must be acknowledged in the face of evidence which contends that adolescent mothering may render particular advantages to mother and child.

A review of the Canadian literature on SA reveals that welfare dependency is not a valid conception for SA participants in Canada. While Canadian leaders have adopted the same ideological and conceptual baggage from our neighbour to the South, Canadian scholarship finds
that SA usage tends not to be long term in nature, but short and episodic. Rather than focusing attention to the deficiencies of the participants, this study suggests that the discourse surrounding welfare receipt ought to be redirected to the structural barriers which fuel the cyclical nature of the SA system.
3.14 Citizenship

Citizenship offers one avenue for understanding the discursive deployment of work: how work is understood and measured, and why SA participants appear flawed in their ‘personal responsibility’ to labour for the good of society. A review of the current scholarship points to a variety of ways of conceptualizing citizenship that would reframe work to encompass more than simply holding a paid job. The fact that lone mothers, for example, engage in so many arenas of work—work which is systematically devalued or unrecognized—means that demands are placed on their time and energy which impede their employment prospects. Such prospects are not only affected by time constraints but also by a host of structural barriers which repeatedly diminish the quality and remuneration of employment for women, particularly those in the lone mother category.

It is evident that women’s informal political participation is frequently undervalued and considered illegitimate in current frameworks of citizenship. Neysmith (2000) contends, “When women’s political action is observed, their contributions get renamed or diminished” (p. 21). Women actively participate daily in provisioning activities, the modes of their participation, however, are not captured in citizenship discourses. The liberal model of citizenship relies profoundly on a masculine/patriarchal understanding of citizenship where citizen is idealized as soldier and worker “making it especially difficult for women to be full citizens, because their socially assigned care-taking responsibilities pose obstacles to women’s working for wages or serving in the military” (Jaggar, 2005, p. 5). Women’s disproportionate work assigned to caring labour thus deprives them of the time and energy necessary to engage fully in actions marked as citizenship activities, i.e. employment in the market, military activity or political life (Jaggar, 2005).

Dobrowolsky (2001) notes that alternate forms of representation and unconventional community activism must be recognized in order to challenge prevailing elitist, adversarial and individualistic politics. The informal political participation and collective provisioning women regularly fulfil must be viewed not only as valid forms of political participation, but must be conceptualized differently to include authentic diversity, including formal and informal modes of participation (Lister, 2003). Civic engagement is not in decline as some might argue (Putnam,
but must be reframed to take into account alternative ways of conceptualizing ‘communicative action’.

Interestingly, in conducting a series of regressions among a number of capitalist countries, Misra, Moller and Budig (2007) found that rates of poverty were significantly lower in countries that adopted an earner-carer strategy evidenced by policies directed at a balance in care and employment for both men and women. Conversely, poverty rates are significantly higher in countries that employ the earner strategy or market-driven approach. Poverty remained higher for lone mothers, however, in both earner (market driven countries) and carer (policies aimed at balancing employment care responsibilities) strategy countries when compared to mothers in dual parent households. Hence, “work-family policies clearly continue to reflect gendered notions of women’s roles in caregiving and men’s roles as breadwinners” (Misra et al., p. 823).

Fraser (1994) alleges that there are several possibilities for the future of post-welfare states. She offers two possibilities which she concedes are unlikely to be instituted anytime in the near future. The first is the universal-breadwinner model which would enable citizens of either gender to be the household breadwinner. The model espouses the establishment of supports aimed at easing the responsibilities impeding women’s employment, for example, state provided day care. The second model is the caregiver-parity model which would afford caregiver allowances to support informal care work, whilst raising the status of the caregiver to make it on par with the breadwinner status. Monies would be allocated for housework, childraising and elder care at wages equitable in paid employment. Albeit immensely important possibilities, even Fraser (1994) recognizes the highly utopian nature of these two visions and acknowledges that they are unlikely to be introduced any time soon in current post industrial welfare states.

In Canada’s New Social Risks, Jenson (2004) explains that while people have firmly embraced the working society, with each individual contributing economic prosperity through waged labour, this vision is not in sync with a structure of supports that would sustain this model. The opportunities for higher education, child care and work opportunities that would support a living wage are necessary, albeit not provided. The depth of poverty of lone mothers is of particular concern (Townsend, 2005). The key features of globalization and the restructuring of the labour market have infused non-standard work arrangements, temporary and contract
labour which leave workers without benefits and subject to seasonal fluctuations (Evans, 2007; Fudge & Vosko, 2002; Townsend, 2005). Townsend (2005) explains that “the unpaid work women do—particularly caring for children or older and dependent family members—may limit the kinds (of) paid jobs they can undertake as well as the hours they can work for pay” (p. 4). Hence, the significant lack of support services perilously limits women’s ability to participate in waged labour.

Tasaruk (2001) examines the increasing reliance on food banks and the general acceptance of food insecurity for large segments of the Canadian population. While many food insecurity programs profess the principles of empowerment through self-help and mutual support via the health promotion rubric, these measures are ultimately problematic. Similar to the embedded notions of welfare dependency, food insecurity is perceived as an individual problem. In the food insecurity literature, individuals are perceived to lack the skills necessary to access fundamental resources. This assumption depoliticizes the actual root of food insecurity, that of a fundamental lack of resources available for the most vulnerable in society. The individual pathology of the poor therefore mollifies calls for social change and policies that would take a structural approach, while allowing politicians to further reduce services and supports to marginalized groups (Tasaruk, 2001).

Lister (2007a) asserts that not only is a redistribution of resources necessary, but also is the promotion of a politics of “recognition and respect” (p. 53). The everyday lived experiences (lived citizenship) must be understood within the context of people renegotiating rights and responsibilities (Gazso, 2009a). Lister (2007a) decries the public/private divide that underlies traditional conceptions of citizenship, pronouncing that understanding lived citizenship must challenge this binary. Moreover, “the inherent masculinity of the universal political subject is intuitively recognized to be impossible—perhaps even undesirable—for women, particularly those who are mothers” (Good-Gingrich, 2008, p. 391).

Further work is needed to explore the ‘everyday world of citizenship’ (Desforges, Jones & Woods, 2005); the social, political and cultural practices that constitute lived citizenship for groups of people in different spatial contexts (Lister, Williams, Anttonen, Bussemaker, Gerhard, Heinen, Johansson, Leira & Siim, 2007). Hall and Williamson (1999) claim that the “meaning
that citizenship actually has in people’s lives and the ways in which people’s social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens” (p. 2) must be the focus of examination. The literature ought to promote a construction of woman-friendly and gender inclusive notions of citizenship (Lister, 1990, p. 92), “which address the exclusionary tensions at the community, national and transnational levels in terms of culture and identity which have served to perpetuate women’s exile as a group from full citizenship” (Craig, 2004, p. 97). Reframing citizenship to be understood from the standpoint of the marginalized in society is paramount (Kabeer, 2005); implications that will be taken up shortly in the dissertation.
CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

This chapter discusses the study design and methodology for the statistical modeling. The study raises a number of important questions about the demographic composition of the caseload in Ontario, including interrogating the social constructions of SA participants embedded within the welfare dependency discourse. The study performs two investigations: first an analysis of the demographic composition of the OW caseload is undertaken to address the operationalization of welfare dependency (long term receipt), questioning whether the dependency discourse descriptively reflects the current ‘empirical reality’ of the OW caseload. Second, the statistical model presented seeks to explain what factors influence SA participants’ exits from the system.

Accordingly, this research study seeks to: (1) empirically investigate the validity of the welfare dependency discourse from a life course perspective and via an exploration of the demographic mix of the OW caseload (i.e. lone mothers fit within the current composition); (2) examine lone mother SA spells vis-à-vis other family structure types, focusing on what variables influence participants’ exit from the system; and (3) reveal what the findings tell us about society. Most importantly, this research endeavours to illuminate how society constructs particular groups (in this study, the targeted group is lone mothers) as inadequate citizens, excluding them from the benefits of ordinary citizenry in society. Social constructivist and critical feminist theoretical frameworks underpin the analysis while acknowledging that these frameworks will be regarded as forms of discourse or cultural resources, just as the quantitative methodological approach will be considered a form of discourse useful to understanding how lone mothers are framed within the Canadian post-welfare state.

While debates on citizenship have gained unequivocal momentum as of late, their theoretical foundations are largely not empirically grounded (Lister, 2007). This study endeavours to contribute to this void in the scholarship. The quantitative study undertaken uses
multi-episode survival analysis using OW caseload data accessed via the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). The discussion of the findings offers a significant contribution to the literature in refuting the mainstream ideology surrounding SA receipt.

4.1 The Research Questions

The study examines the present nature of SA usage in Ontario, interrogating the following research questions: (1) Does the operationalization of welfare dependency (long term receipt) descriptively reflect the current ‘reality’ of the OW caseload? What is the demographic composition of the caseload—do lone mothers comprise the largest SA population in Ontario? What different social locations are presented by participants? What does this information indicate about how participants are socially constructed within the welfare dependency paradigm? These questions are addressed in the demographic examination of the data. For the multi-episode survival analysis, I ask questions pertaining to SA spells, particularly with regards to the SA exit rate: (2) What does the statistical analysis indicate about SA spells for lone mothers vis-à-vis participants from other family structure types? For men and women or for immigrants vis-à-vis Canadian born participants? Do these data support existing social constructions of SA participants?

Rather than directing the ideologically focused microscope on issues highlighting chronic SA usage, I frame study results within the broader context, more specifically, the proportion of the population not ‘welfare dependent’ or tied to the SA system. Accordingly, the purpose of the study is aptly found in the discussion of study findings which promotes a different paradigm outside the present welfare dependency hypothesis; a paradigm which is more accurate and reflective of SA participants’ life course, their exits off the SA system and the post-welfare state environment which disproportionately affects women relative to men and their expected life trajectories. This alternative paradigm focuses on the myriad forms of work women engage in, giving value and recognition to these activities where they have been erstwhile deliberately ignored (Lister, 2007).
4.2 Study Design

The study involves data analysis of administrative caseload data collected by the MCSS. The MCSS collects data from Ontario municipalities on a host of personal characteristics of participants (i.e. gender, age, education, family structure, etc.). A list of the variables incorporated in the repeated Cox Proportional Hazard (PH) models is attached in Appendix 2.

All estimation procedures and data analysis took place in a specified lab at the MCSS site. Only participant case numbers (benefit unit identification) were used and all identifying information about subjects (i.e. names, social insurance numbers) were excluded from the dataset. In this way the anonymity of sample participants was ensured.

The decision to utilize the Ontario Works dataset, and exclude other potential sources of data, was based on its key advantage, namely that it is, apart from municipal data, the only data specifically for Ontario that follows workfare participants (and their children) for the duration of their encounter(s) with the SA system over the long term.

4.3 Definition of Terms

As in any analysis it is important to define one’s terms to ensure clarity and consistency. Henceforth the following terms will be used in the analysis and discussion sections: covariate refers to the independent or explanatory variables in the repeated (multi-episode used interchangeably) Cox PH regressions; dependent variable refers to the dichotomous variable indicating the hazard of event occurrence. The hazard represents the probability (odds or likelihood) of an individual experiencing the event (going from on to off a SA spell) given that s/he is at risk at that time (this term is synonymous with the hazard function or hazard rate used by others). The risk set refers to the group that is at risk of experiencing the event; in this study all adult participants aged 16 to 78 who were on a SA spell in January 2004. OW participants will be used to describe the individual cases/applicants in the sample. I avoid using ‘recipients’ in recognition of the conceptual baggage associated with this term.
4.4 The Sample

The final sample included a risk set of all adult OW participants (applicants only, not ‘dependents’ [children, dependent adults], spouses or other members the household) from ages 16-78 who were on a SA spell for the first time in January 2004.

A computer programmer was employed to structure the data into survival format. The repeated Cox PH regression models were conducted using the statistical software program STATA (v. 10).

4.5 Sampling

First, the totality of cases in the dataset was observed in order to explore the current demographic composition of the Ontario caseload. This demographic information was crucial in providing a more precise account of OW participants and whether the focus on lone mothers as the key beneficiary of SA is at all accurate. The intersections of gender, class (income), geographic location and other aspects of identity play a role in determining who utilizes SA and how it is utilized. For example, SA spells have been demonstrated to be longer for younger, poorly educated, never married and not employable lone mothers, particularly lone mothers with many young children (Stewart & Dooley, 1999). Accordingly, running descriptive statistics on the totality of the dataset yields a richer analysis on the various intersections presented by OW participants.

For the repeated Cox PH regression models, the sample included all adult participants (applicants only) aged 16-78 years who were on SA for the first time in January 2004. In examining lone mother SA spells, Dooley and Stewart (1999) specified an age range of 18-59 for mothers in their sample; however, given that mothers may have children at younger ages (i.e. between the ages of 16-18) and can then begin their involvement with SA through the Learning Earning and Parenting program (Smith-Carrier, 2010), I adopted an age specification which included this age range. The final sample included all adults aged 16-78 years who were on OW in January 2004 (the commencement of the panel), following their SA histories over a
five year period until December 2009 (the conclusion of the panel). The final sample included 3,842 participants and a total of 5,942 SA spells.

4.6 The Variables

The variables reported in the MCSS caseload dataset are numerous. In consultation with the supervisory committee, the number of variables was reduced while ensuring that all relevant variables (remaining cognizant of variable omission bias) were included in the model as informed by the theoretical literature. A list of covariates included in the analysis with their units of measurement is presented in Appendix 2. These included: gender, age, education level, immigration status (a proxy is used indicating foreign born or Canadian born), family structure, marital status and child count.

4.7 Limitations

Some biases confronting survey data may also influence the OW dataset. Attrition, underreporting errors and non-response biases may present some concerns. However, given the data’s large and administrative nature, the data is less subject to these sources of error than other survey data (Beaulieu et al., 2005). Fitzgerald et al. (1995), for example, find little evidence of attrition bias in their study of intergenerational SA study (as cited in Gottschalk, 1996). However, Pepper (1995) addresses the nature of attrition, and more specifically, whether or not it is exogenous. If unobserved factors concurrently affect attrition and SA access then the data might provide inconsistent estimates of the relationships examined. This possibility must be noted.

The MCSS only collects data relevant to the eligibility of the OW participant’s file. Consequently information is not requested nor is data collected on a participant’s immigration status (except in cases where applicants are sponsored immigrants or refugees/refugee claimants) or on a participant’s race/ethnicity. While this information would yield a richer analysis, the covariate ‘foreign born’ is used as a proxy to indicate immigration status (i.e. whether an applicant is Canadian born or whether they immigrated to Canada). Further information on participants’ employment histories, past earnings and childcare arrangements
would have been helpful but could not be added to the model because these variables were missing significant amounts of data (i.e. the vast majority of men would not have information on childcare).

4.8 Duration Models

When analyzing medical and epidemiological data, researchers utilize terms such as ‘death’, ‘failure’ or ‘termination’ in the statistical model of survival analysis. In the social sciences, these terms do not adequately classify the events or subjects under study, given that typically the focus of the analysis does not necessarily lead to the ‘death’ of subjects (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 2004). Accordingly, what is termed failure data by some is referred to as event history analysis or survival analysis by others. Event history modeling allows one to study particular events, the duration of time between such events (called spells or episodes) and the probability of the events occurring at specific points in time (Barton & Pillai, 1995). Box-Steffensmeier and Jones (2004) refer to event history data as generated from failure time processes where the unit of analysis is observed from the time of origin (in this study, January 2004), with an event representing a transition from one state to another (on SA to off SA, for example). In some occasions, the units analyzed do not transition from one state to another, in such cases, units are censored. The time passed between the initial state and the transmission of the event (on SA to off SA) is the survival time, also called the duration time (Box-Steffenmeier & Jones, 2004). The analysis centres on modeling the risk or probability an event will occur (exiting SA) with the hazard indicating the probability of the event occurring and the pace of the occurrence (Barton & Pillai, 1995).

In terms of a time metric, Barton and Pillai (1995) suggest that spell intervals might appropriately be calculated in months which is fitting given that SA is distributed monthly. This interval was adopted for the statistical models at hand. In duration models the incorporation of time-constant variables (i.e. variables generally not subject to change over time; for example, gender or race/ethnicity) and time-varying covariates (variables which change over time, for example: family structure or marital status) is relatively straightforward.
Censoring refers to a lack of information (Allison, 1984) either before the panel commencement or after the panel has concluded. Specifically, left censoring refers to spells which began prior to the date of the study analysis. In this study no spells were left censored. Right censoring refers to spells in which the beginning of the spell is observed but the end is not, or in cases in which the case is lost prior to the conclusion of the study period (Barton & Pillai, 1995). To eliminate right censored cases (or cases for whom only complete information is provided for a specified period of time) would inevitably lead to biased results; hence, Barton and Pillai (1995) suggest retaining right censored cases in the model. The assumption of independent censoring must be made in this regard—an assumption which maintains that censoring must be unrelated to the probability of a subject experiencing the event. Right censored cases i.e. cases which did not reach an observable failure by the end date of the panel (2009) are included in the study. The model allows all sample members to provide information, even if the end of their spells on SA are not observed, and permits inclusion of variables that change over time (time-varying covariates) that can be used to explain spell length (Gottschaulk, 1992).

4.9 Cox PH Regression Models

Cox PH regression, a partial likelihood method (Cox 1975), is well suited to analyses examining the effects of multiple variables—dichotomous, categorical and continuous—on survival and does not assume any particular distribution shape for the duration time of events (Cox, 1972). It is considered more robust than parametric models if the assumptions of the regression are met (Garson, 2010). While Cox models are flexible and allow the shape of the estimated baseline hazard to be examined, they do not allow for testing hypotheses about that shape. Thus using the Cox PH model, I am unable to make conclusions regarding duration dependence, how the risk of exiting SA varies over time, and lagged duration dependence, how the length of the current spell varies with the length of previous spells (notice even the terms adopted here promote the dependency hypothesis).

The model permits analyses of the strength of association between covariates and the dependent variable; here, the hazard, indicating event occurrence. In the case of categorical or
dichotomous covariates, the hazard (the exponentiation of the regression coefficient indicated by $Exp(B)$) estimates the relative risk of the rate of event occurrence for the comparison group (e.g. Canadian born = 0) in relation to the reference group (e.g. foreign born = 1). Covariates with a positive coefficient are associated with increased hazards or decreased survival times, whereas covariates exhibiting a negative coefficient are associated with decreased hazards or increased survival times (Norušis, 2010). For a continuous covariate, the hazard refers to the rate of event occurrence given a one unit increase in the covariate to the hazard without such an increase.

A key assumption of the Cox model is ‘proportional hazards’ meaning the hazard of the various levels of a covariate will remain constant over time. For time-varying covariates, however, the proportional hazards assumption may be violated given the nature of these covariates having different rates for different individuals which fluctuate over time. To contend with the non-proportionality of hazard ratios for time-varying covariates, Allison (1984) suggests the incorporation of interaction terms of these covariates with time, if the interactions with time are so strong that suppressing them would lead to misleading results, or through the use of stratification (Allison, 1984). If the interaction with time for a particular covariate yields a significant coefficient, it may be concluded that the covariate violates the proportionality assumption; on the other hand, if the interaction term for a covariate is not statistically significant then one has evidence for non-proportionality. By adding interaction terms for time-varying covariates, Allison (1984) contends, “the method of diagnosis is also the cure” (p. 157).

The methods undertaken for the demographic analysis and Cox PH statistical modeling seek to examine the legitimacy of the welfare dependency discourse. A repeated survival analysis model was adopted to examine SA spells, and in particular, which covariates significantly impact individuals’ exits from the SA system—the analysis of which yields informative results that would counter existing social constructions surrounding SA receipt. To these findings we now direct our attention.
CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents cross-tabulations on various aspects of OW access; providing a useful snapshot of data on the current demographic composition of the caseload. The demographic snapshot includes all adult participants (not including spouses or dependents, unless otherwise stated) in November 2009. The total number of the caseload during that month was 236,219. The second section of the chapter presents the findings from the repeated Cox PH models.

PART I

5A.1 Demographic Snapshot of OW Data

Observing the data structure provides unique insight into the actual composition of groups within the SA system. These data accessed from the MCSS Ontario Works’ caseload provide a snapshot of the composition in one month: November 2009. As the snapshot would only examine the findings from one month of data, I opted to access the most current data available in order to anchor the discussion in the present.

The total number of cases in the OW caseload in November 2009 was 236,219; 126,861 females and 109,357 males (applicants only). With dependents included, the total number of people in receipt of benefits was 433,831 (this includes applicants, dependent adults in the household, children and spouses). In order to question the dominant discourse which recurrently situates lone mothers as the principal participants of SA, it is important to observe the trends in the caseload in order to provide a more accurate view of Ontario’s SA clientele.
5A.2  Applicants and Members on OW

Table 5A.1 accounts for the total number of OW members in November 2009 by relationship to the applicant, including other dependent adults in the household, dependent children and spouses. Member role indicates the total number from all member types in that month, including participants, spouses, children and dependent adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Both Genders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td></td>
<td>126,861</td>
<td>109,357</td>
<td>236,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Count</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,945</td>
<td>15,170</td>
<td>26,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Count</td>
<td></td>
<td>132,650</td>
<td>29,281</td>
<td>161,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Adult Count</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,186</td>
<td>2,381</td>
<td>9,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Member Types</td>
<td></td>
<td>277,641</td>
<td>156,189</td>
<td>433,831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.1 The number of all member types on OW caseload in November 2009

As is evident in the table above, the total number of SA participants (applicants) in November 2009 was 236,219 and the total number of beneficiaries (all member types) was 433,831.

All the tables that follow indicate total numbers based on SA participants only and do not include dependent adults, children or spouses. Table 5A.2 indicates the total number of cases headed by females and males in the November 2009 caseload.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure Gender</th>
<th>Couples with children</th>
<th>Couples without children</th>
<th>Singles with children</th>
<th>Singles without children</th>
<th>All Family Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8,339</td>
<td>2,605</td>
<td>68,287</td>
<td>47,630</td>
<td>126,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10,970</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>5,018</td>
<td>89,169</td>
<td>109,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Genders</td>
<td>19,309</td>
<td>6,806</td>
<td>73,305</td>
<td>136,799</td>
<td>236,219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.2 The number of participants by gender in each family structure type in November 2009

In Table 5A.2, single females with children represented 68,287 cases (or 29 percent of the total caseload), while single males with children comprised 5,018 cases (or 2 percent of the

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1 There appears to be a coding error as one case is missing from the total number of females participants.
caseload in that month). At the same time, single males without children representing 89,169 participants (38 percent of the total) surpassed single females without children with 47,630 participants (20 percent of the total).

Table 5A.3 reveals the number of cases by family structure type in the caseload in November 2009: couples with children; couples without children, singles with children and singles without children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Couples with children</th>
<th>Couples without children</th>
<th>Singles with children</th>
<th>Singles without children</th>
<th>All Family Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of months on SA</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>3,408</td>
<td>1,621</td>
<td>10,835</td>
<td>37,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>2,739</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>8,680</td>
<td>24,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>2,251</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>7,243</td>
<td>17,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>1,868</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>5,936</td>
<td>13,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>1,672</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>5,181</td>
<td>9,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>4,241</td>
<td>6,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>3,486</td>
<td>4,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>2,843</td>
<td>3,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>1,709</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>7,696</td>
<td>8,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36-59</td>
<td>1,673</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>8,473</td>
<td>6,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>8,690</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total months on SA</td>
<td>19,309</td>
<td>6,806</td>
<td>73,305</td>
<td>136,799</td>
<td>236,219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.3 The number of months on SA by family structure type on SA in November 2009

As is observed in Table 5.3 the single largest family structure type accessing OW in November 2009 was singles without children (37,040 participants) at the 0-3 month access range. Singles without children (136,799 or 58 percent of the total of 236,219 participants) remained the dominant family structure accessing OW in all durations of access, followed by singles with children (73,305 cases or 31 percent of the total). It is interesting to note that although singles without children comprise the greatest proportion of cases in the early month ranges of access, singles with children have a slightly greater share of cases in the longest durations of access (25-35 months to 60+ months). Couples without children represent the least number of cases (6,806 cases or 3 percent of the total), followed by couples with children (19,309 cases or 8 percent of total).

Table 5A.4 details the gender by age range of OW clientele in November 2009.
### Table 5A.4 The number of female and male participants by age on OW in November 2009

In Table 5A.4 the leading age range for both genders is 20-24 years (23,084 female participants and 15,913 male participants). Total females (126,861) surpass males (109,357) by a margin of 17,504 cases. This is informative—as females represent 54 percent of the caseload during that month, while males comprise 46 percent. While it appears that females are the leading group in SA usage in relation to their male counterparts, the difference is only marginal. Men and women appear to be affected differently by poverty. Here we see clearly the distributional differences between older males and younger females. Women appear most frequently on SA at a young age while men are concentrated at the older age ranges.

Next, Table 5A.5 depicts the number of months on SA for age ranges of females in the OW caseload in November 2009.

### Table 5A.5 The number of months on SA for females by age ranges in November 2009

| Age Ranges | 0-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 13-15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65+ | All Client Ages |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|----|----|----|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|----------|
| 0-3        | 228 | 105 | 50  | 24    | 4     | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65+ | 126,861  |
| 7-9        | 1,162| 687 | 444 | 265   | 152   | 1,162| 1,162| 1,162| 1,162| 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162 | 1,162| 236,219  |
We observe in Table 5A.5 that females ages 20-24 years comprise the largest group accessing SA for almost all month ranges of SA receipt, except in the 16-18, 36-59 and 60+ month ranges occupied by females ages 25-29 years. The longest duration of SA use (the 60+ month range), was occupied by females ages 35-39 years, followed by females ages 40-44 years.

Table 5A.6 documents the age ranges by months on OW in November 2009 for males.

Table 5A.6 indicates that males ages 20-24 years comprise the largest group accessing SA for the shortest durations of SA use (in the 0-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, 13-15 month ranges). Males in the older age ranges access SA for the longest durations. Males aged 45-49 represent the largest proportion of cases in the 16-18, 25-35 and 36-59 month ranges, and men aged 50-54 years accessed SA the most for the longest duration (the 60+ month range).
5A.3 Immigration Status

The following section provides a snapshot of the OW caseload for November 2009 in terms of immigration status. As previously noted, the MCSS does not collect information on race/ethnicity or even immigration status unless the immigrant falls into specified immigration categories. Hence the data here only represent a portion of immigrant statuses and do not reflect the totality of the immigrant population accessing SA (i.e. skilled or economic class immigrants are not represented as data are not collected on these populations).

The MCSS has organized the caseload into different cubes. The immigration cube provides detailed information on all participants presenting specific immigration statuses and categories, while the overall caseload cube offers information on all participants, including Canadian born and participants presenting immigration status. The following section documents the number of SA participants holding some form of immigration status as depicted in the immigration cube. The total number of SA participants with immigration status in November 2009 was 23 233, representing 9.8 percent of the caseload in that month. The total number of sponsored immigrants in the immigration caseload was 5 483 (24 percent of the immigration caseload) and 17 750 were refugee claimants (or 76 percent of the immigration caseload). Appendix 3 outlines the number of immigrants in the sponsored immigrant and refugee categories.

Table 5A.7 presents the number of participants by immigration category in the immigration cube on OW in November 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>10,082</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,672</td>
<td>7,701</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Genders</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,725</td>
<td>17,783</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23,233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.7 Number of participants by immigration category on OW in November 2009

As noted, the total number of SA participants included in the immigration cube in November 2009 was 23 233. By far, refugee claimants (17 783 participants) comprise the largest group
accessing SA of all of the immigration statuses collected by the MCSS. The second largest group was permanent residents (3725 participants) and immigrants who have acquired Canadian citizenship (1638 participants).

Table 5A.8 describes the participants in the immigration cube by immigration category (not by status). In this table, we are able to observe family class (sponsored) immigrants and participants representing other immigration categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>9759</td>
<td>797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2613</td>
<td>7410</td>
<td>1374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Genders</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3513</td>
<td>17169</td>
<td>2171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.8 The number of OW participants in each immigration category in November 2009

From Table 5A.8 we see that refugee claimants is still the dominant immigration category representing 17169 participants, followed by family class immigrants with 3513 participants (or 15 of all immigrants in the immigration cube).

Table 5A.9 provides the number of SA participants with immigration status on OW in November 2009 by months on assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months on Assistance</th>
<th>Immigration Status</th>
<th>0-3</th>
<th>4-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
<th>10-12</th>
<th>13-15</th>
<th>16-18</th>
<th>19-21</th>
<th>22-24</th>
<th>25-35</th>
<th>36-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>Total All Ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Citizen</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate of Indian Status</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention Refugee</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportee - Inactionable</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers Permit</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Immigration Status</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Status</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident-Landed</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>3,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Claimant</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>3,129</td>
<td>2,836</td>
<td>2,663</td>
<td>2,065</td>
<td>1,925</td>
<td>1,285</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>1,471</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Visa</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa/Application for Landing/Perm Resid.</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91
Table 5A.9 The number months on SA by immigration status on OW in November 2009

Again in Table 5A.9 we observe that refugee claimants formed the greatest share of SA participants with immigration status in November 2009. This category of participants also had the highest numbers for the shortest durations of OW access. Interestingly, however, permanent resident-landed participants was the category with the longest duration of SA use (60+ month range) surpassing the refugee claimant category.

Table 5A.10 depicts the education levels by immigration status in November 2009.

Table 5A.10 The education levels of SA participants by immigration status in November 2009

Table 5A.10 describes the education levels of SA participants in the immigration cube in November 2009, data that are self-reported by participants to SA workers. Refugee claimants present a variety of educational backgrounds, some with very low levels of education and others very high (post-secondary). This also appears to be the case for permanent-resident landed participants and immigrants who have acquired Canadian citizenship.
5A.4 Earnings Amounts

The following provides a snapshot of average earnings amounts of OW participants in November 2009. Table 5A.11 notes the average earnings amount for both genders in that month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Couples with children</th>
<th>Couples without children</th>
<th>Singles with children</th>
<th>Singles without children</th>
<th>All Family Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Earnings Amount</td>
<td>$890.35</td>
<td>$768.62</td>
<td>$773.08</td>
<td>$457.10</td>
<td>$680.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.11 The average earnings amounts by family structure type on OW in November 2009

As is observed in Table 5A.11 the average amount earned by all family structure types in November 2009 was $680.65.

Table 5A.12 provides the breakdown of earnings for males on the OW caseload in November 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Couples with children</th>
<th>Couples without children</th>
<th>Singles with children</th>
<th>Singles without children</th>
<th>All Family Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Earnings Amount</td>
<td>$891.16</td>
<td>$726.18</td>
<td>$746.26</td>
<td>$453.13</td>
<td>$617.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.12 The average earnings amounts by family structure type led by males on OW in November 2009

Here we see that male heads of households (defined as SA applicants) in the family structure couples with children earned the most ($891.16) in November 2009, followed by singles with children, couples without children, and finally, singles without children. The average earnings for all male headed family structures was $617.28 in that month.

Similar to the table above, Table 5A.13 provides the average earnings for female heads of households in November 2009 by family structure.
In this table we observe that female heads of households earn more than males headed households in every family structure type, except for if they are partnered with a spouse and children, in which case, they earn only a few dollars less.

### 5A.5 Accommodation

In terms of accommodation, SA participants are found in a variety of accommodation structures, although one accommodation category dominates (rental accommodation). Table 5A.14 provides the types of accommodation types by family structure in November 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Couples with children</th>
<th>Couples without children</th>
<th>Singles with children</th>
<th>Singles without children</th>
<th>All Family Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged Home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarders</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>4,452</td>
<td>5,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic/Psychiatric</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aged Home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>1,597</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>4,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renters</td>
<td>18,361</td>
<td>6,319</td>
<td>70,956</td>
<td>128,642</td>
<td>224,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transient/Homeless</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1,517</td>
<td>1,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,309</td>
<td>6,806</td>
<td>73,305</td>
<td>136,799</td>
<td>236,219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.14 The number of participants in each accommodation type by family structure on OW in November 2009

As is observed above, SA participants generally rent accommodation (in 224,279 participants), representing 95 percent of the caseload. Singles without children form the predominant family structure type (128,642 participants) renting in that category. The next most prevalent accommodation category is boarding with 5,106 participants, followed by owners of accommodation (4,768 participants). It is noteworthy that 1,598 cases are transient/homeless participants representing .007 percent of the caseload in November 2009. Obviously most of
the transient/homeless population in Ontario is not on OW, although they may be accessing the Ontario Disability Support Program or other income assistance programs. A bar graph depicting accommodation types is presented in Appendix 4.

5A.6 Participants in the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program

The following tables provide a snapshot of participants in November 2009 that were involved in the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program of OW. Participation in LEAP is mandatory for participants ages 16 to 18 with children in order to receive benefits, while participants ages 19 to 25 with children may participate in the program voluntarily if they have not yet completed high school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Both Genders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAP Voluntary</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2,674</td>
<td>2,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP Mandatory</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>1,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3,825</td>
<td>3,936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.15 The number of participants in LEAP (both mandatory and voluntary) in November 2009

Table 5A.15 indicates that there was a total of 3,936 participants in the LEAP program in November 2009, with 1,181 mandatory LEAP participants and 2,755 participants involved in the program voluntarily. As might be expected, there are a dearth of males participating in the program (111 participants) compared to 3,825 females. The LEAP population (3,936 participants) accounts for 2 percent of the total caseload for that month.

Table 5A.16 offers a breakdown of LEAP participants by age and gender in November 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Ranges</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Both Genders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,075</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>Both Genders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As is demonstrated in Table 5A.16, the predominant age range for LEAP participants is the 20-24 year age range for both females (2075 participants) and males (62 participants), followed by 19 year old participants (605 females and 19 males).

5A.7  Addiction Services

Table 5A.17 explores the use of addiction services for the OW population in November 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addiction Services</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Both Genders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>2,560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.17 The number of SA participants in Addiction Services in November 2009

It is apparent from Table 5A.17 that 2560 people were referred to and involved in addiction services in November 2009. This number accounts for .01 percent of the total caseload for that month.

5A.8  The OW caseload from 2003-2010

Table 5A.18 notes how the caseload has changed somewhat in recent years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Both Genders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>111,879</td>
<td>80,217</td>
<td>192,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>111,172</td>
<td>80,551</td>
<td>191,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>114,707</td>
<td>83,670</td>
<td>198,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>115,010</td>
<td>84,232</td>
<td>199,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>112,210</td>
<td>82,710</td>
<td>194,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>114,166</td>
<td>88,015</td>
<td>202,181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.18 The number of OW participants by gender over the years 2003-2010
As illustrated in the table above, the number of females on SA has remained relatively stable over the past several years until the recession of 2009-10 when there was a jump from 114 166 to 126 961 of females in the caseload, whereas male involvement has been steadily rising over the years, also spiking in 2009. While the OW caseload has fluctuated over the past several years (the lowest number of participants on OW in 2003-04 at 191 723, while the highest number in 2009-10 at 237 232), caseload numbers generally oscillate around 200 000.

**5A.9 Education**

Table 5A.19 presents a detailed account of the education levels of the total caseload cube (N= 239 219) in November 2009 as compared to participants in the immigration cube (N = 23 233), both the number of cases (participants) and percentages are provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Total # (N = 239 219)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Immigration Cube</th>
<th>Total # (N = 23 233)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.0097</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Education</td>
<td>1,611</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>No Education</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>2,157</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>1,922</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>10,038</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>1,419</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>15,815</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>31,339</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>1,564</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>40,780</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>1,515</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>71,724</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>7,425</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 13/O.A.C.</td>
<td>4,403</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grade 13/O.A.C.</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Secondary</td>
<td>52,923</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Post Secondary</td>
<td>6,809</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Educ. Levels</td>
<td>236,219</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>All Educ. Levels</td>
<td>23,233</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5A.19 The education level of participants from the total caseload cube and immigration cube on OW in November 2009

As outlined in Table 5A.19, the education levels of the entirety of the caseload closely match those of the immigration composition (as stated, however, the MCSS does not collect information on all immigration statuses). The education level with the highest percentage of cases is Grade 12 for the whole caseload (30 percent) and immigration cases (32 percent),
followed by post-secondary education, 22 percent for the entirety of the caseload and 29 percent of participants in the immigration caseload.

PART II

5B.1    Repeated Cox PH Models

Once the mass of data was amalgamated into a comprehensive dataset, the data required transformation from person format to spell format. This data restructuring followed an Andersen-Gill model (1982) whereby each row of data contains the spell lengths of on SA intervals; intervals ending in either failure (in this case exiting SA) or censored. Henceforth, each row of data would align with the start-stop of on SA spells, yielding multiple rows of data for each subject. The dependent variable in survival analysis indicates the status of whether an event has failed (going from on SA to off SA). In this study, the status (spell_on) variable indicates when a spell is on SA and when it has been censored. All Cox PH regressions that follow are based on a sample of participants that were on a SA spell for the first time at panel commencement, tracking their SA spells from January 2004 to December 2009. The total number of SA participants in the sample was 3 842 and the total number of spells was 5 942.

Similar to Stewart and Dooley (1999) and Barrett (1996) the study adopted the “two month rule” for defining spell length. A spell is considered to have begun only after two consecutive months in which the participant is not in receipt of SA and ends when the participant experiences two successive months in which they are not issued a SA cheque. The rationale behind the two month rule offered in Stewart and Dooley’s (1999) study was that a small proportion of cases presented a one-month, off SA spell (one month with no cheque issued prior to or following a month with a cheque) which appeared to be administrative or coding errors and not true spell terminations (Barrett [1996] identifies these as coding errors or program churning).

5B.2    Descriptive Statistics

Table 5B.2 presents descriptive statistics for the dichotomous or categorical covariates included in the repeated Cox PH models.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,657</td>
<td>43.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,185</td>
<td>56.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family structure with child count</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with one child</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>4.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with two children</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with three or more children</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles without children</td>
<td>2,629</td>
<td>68.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with one child</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>10.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with two children</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with three or more children</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples without children</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>4.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Grades 1-8</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>8.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Grades 9-13</td>
<td>2,520</td>
<td>65.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Post Secondary</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>25.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Count</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having one child</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>22.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having two or more children</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>13.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having no children</td>
<td>2,458</td>
<td>63.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Born</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>46.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian born</td>
<td>2,065</td>
<td>53.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (common-law/spousal)</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>15.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (divorced, separated, widowed)</td>
<td>3,259</td>
<td>84.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of participants</strong></td>
<td>3,842</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5B.1 Descriptive statistics for dummy covariates (categorical or dichotomous)

Table 5B.2 Descriptive statistics for the continuous covariate age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3,842</td>
<td>31.022</td>
<td>11.707</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5B.2 Descriptive statistics for the continuous covariate age
The sample size (n), means, standard deviations, medians, minimums and maximums for spell lengths are listed by family structure, gender, marital status and foreign born covariates in Table 5B.3.

### Participant Spells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Spells</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spells per participant</td>
<td>3 842</td>
<td>1.547</td>
<td>.0895</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Overall Length of Spells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Length of Spells</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (months)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall length of spells</td>
<td>5 218</td>
<td>12.392</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Spells by Covariate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spells by Covariate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (months)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with 1 child</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>14.022</td>
<td>12.785</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with 2 children</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>14.385</td>
<td>13.101</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with 3+ children</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>14.874</td>
<td>14.659</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles without children</td>
<td>3,676</td>
<td>11.340</td>
<td>11.063</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with 1 child</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>15.882</td>
<td>14.683</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with 2 children</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>16.817</td>
<td>16.279</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with 3+ children</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>12.896</td>
<td>11.049</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3 087</td>
<td>10.762</td>
<td>10.459</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 131</td>
<td>14.753</td>
<td>13.861</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>13.835</td>
<td>12.69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>4,526</td>
<td>12.171</td>
<td>12.022</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Born</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>2,132</td>
<td>14.952</td>
<td>13.211</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian born</td>
<td>3,086</td>
<td>10.623</td>
<td>10.972</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5B.3 Summary data on spell lengths for the family structure, gender, marital status and foreign born covariates

Summary data indicates that the average number of spells for the sample of 3 842 participants was 1.5 (median 1) with 6 being the maximum number of spells a participant

---

2 The number of overall spells used here (5 218) does not take into account right censored spells included in the repeated Cox regression models (total spells of 5 942).
encountered in the sample. The overall mean spell length for all observations was 12 months (median 8 months). The mean spell length for males was 11 months and (median 7 months) and mean spell length for females was 15 months (median 10 months).

The mean spell length for couples with one child was 14 months (median 10 months); 14 months for couples with two children (median 9 months); 15 months for couples with three or more children (median 9 months). For singles without children the average was 11 months (median 7 months); 16 months for singles with one child (median 10 months); singles with two children the mean was 17 months (median 10 months); and singles with three or more children the average was 13 months (median 9 months).

The average spell length for participants who were married (spousal/common-law) was 14 months (median 9 months) and for singles (separated, divorced or widowed) the mean spell length was 12 months (median 7 months).

Spell lengths for the foreign born covariate indicate that Canadian born participants had average spells of 11 months (median 6 months) and foreign born participants had longer spells of 15 months (median 10 months).

**5B.4 Repeated Cox Regression Original Model**

Table 5B.4 presents the results of the recurrent Cox PH regression model for all adult participants in the sample ages 16-78 years who were on SA for the first time in January 2004. The Omnibus, or likelihood ratio test, indicated that the model is significant (p> .05), indicating that at least one of the covariates contributes significantly to the model.

<p>| Sample size = 3 842 participants; 5 942 spells |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates used in the analysis</th>
<th>Variable type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family structure type</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (couples without children is the reference category; family1 = couples with 1 child; family2 = couples with 2 children; family3 = couples with 3+ children; family4 = singles without children; family5 = singles with 1 child; family6 = singles with 2 children; family7 = singles with 3+ children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (male = 0; female = 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5B.4 Results of the repeated Cox PH original model

The key covariate family structure revealed statistically significant hazard ratios for only one family structure type: singles with one child. The estimated hazard ratio of singles with one child \([\text{Exp}(-0.17922) = .8359; 100(.8359 – 1) = -16.41]\) yielded a 16 percent decrease in the chances of leaving SA in comparison to the reference group (couples without children). The other family structure types did not realize statistical significance.

The dummy covariates for education level also did not generate statistically significant results. The gender covariate did reach statistical significance, however, females showing a decrease of 26 percent \([\text{Exp}(-0.3002) = .74067; 100(.74067 - 1) = -25.93]\) in the odds of leaving SA as compared to males. Being foreign born also produced statistically significant results yielding \([\text{Exp}(-0.39553) = .67332; 100(.67332 - 1) = -32.67]\) a 33 percent decrease in the odds of exiting SA as compared to those Canadian born.
Finally, the continuous age covariate was statistically significant, indicating the hazard of exiting SA goes up by .3 percent for every additional year of age \([\text{Exp}(0.003312) = 1.0033; 100(1.0033 - 1) = .332]\).

Given that there were a quite a number of categories (dummy covariates) for family structure, the interaction with time model did not provide estimates for several covariates. Consequently, the following section records the results of a revised model with family structure and education recoded into fewer categories.

### 5B.5 Repeated Cox Regression with Revised Family Structure and Education Covariates

In order to contend with the limited number of observations in some of the categories in the original model, the family structure covariate was recoded to reduce the number of categories from seven to five. Education was also reduced from three dummy covariates to two. Table 5B.5 presents the results of the revised model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size = 3 842 participants; 5 942 spells</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covariates used in the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Covariate                  | Coefficient | Robust Standard Error | z    | P>|z|  | 95% Confidence Interval |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------|-----|----------------------|
| Couples with 1 child      | -0.12374    | 0.099243              | -1.25| 0.212| -0.31825              | 0.070771              |
| Couples with 2+ children  | -0.18616    | 0.091464              | -2.04| 0.042| -0.36543              | -0.0069              |
| Singles without children  | 0.045088    | 0.070814              | 0.64 | 0.524| -0.0937              | 0.18388              |
| Singles with 1 child      | -0.17832    | 0.083232              | -2.14| 0.032| -0.34145              | -0.01519             |
| Singles with 2+ children  | -0.11695    | 0.092265              | -1.27| 0.205| -0.29779              | 0.063883             |
Table 5B.5 Results from the recoded family structure and education covariates

Here we observe that couples with two or more children [Exp(-0.18616) = .8304; 100(.83014 - 1) = -16.99] are at a 17 percent decreased odds of exiting SA as compared to couples without children. Singles with one child [Exp(-0.17832) = .8367; 100(.83667 - 1) = -16.33] witness a 16 percent decrease in the odds of exiting, and singles with two or more children [Exp(-0.11695) = .8896; 100(.8896 - 1) = -11.04] are at an 11 percent decreased odds of leaving SA as compared to couples with no children.

The continuous age covariate indicates that for every additional year of age, the hazard of exiting SA increases by .3 percent [Exp(0.002991) = 1.003; 100(1.003 - 1) = .3]. Moreover, the gender covariate indicates that females [Exp(-0.30303) = .7386; 100(.7386 - 1) = -26.14] are at a 26 percent decreased chance of leaving SA as compared to males. Again, being foreign born is statistically significant [Exp(-0.40378) = .6678; 100(.6678 - 1) = -33.22], yielding a 33 percent decrease in the odds of going off of SA as compared to those born in Canada. As in the original model, the covariates for education level were not statistically significant.

5B.7 Repeated Cox PH Regression Model with Marital Status and Child Dummy Covariates

In order to investigate certain covariates further, the original model was changed, replacing the family structure dummy covariates with a covariate indicating whether participants are married (and/or common-law) or single (separated, divorced or widowed) and the inclusion of two dummy covariates to represent whether participants have children (one dummy covariate for one child and another dummy for two or more children, no children is the reference category). The model generated the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0.002991</th>
<th>0.001412</th>
<th>2.12</th>
<th>0.034</th>
<th>0.000223</th>
<th>0.005758</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.30303</td>
<td>0.034525</td>
<td>-8.78</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.3707</td>
<td>-0.23536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>-0.40378</td>
<td>0.030215</td>
<td>-13.36</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.463</td>
<td>-0.34456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Grades 1-13</td>
<td>-0.21628</td>
<td>0.171715</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>-0.55283</td>
<td>0.120277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Post Sec.</td>
<td>-0.09095</td>
<td>0.172436</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>-0.42892</td>
<td>0.247022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample size = 3 842 participants; 5 942 spells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates used in the analysis</th>
<th>Variable type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child count</td>
<td>time-dependent; continuous recoded into dummy covariates (no children is the reference category; child1 = 1 child; child2 = 2 or more children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariate (single = 0; married = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (male = 0; female = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>continuous covariate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (no education is the reference category; edu1 = elementary (Grades 1-8); edu2 = secondary (Grades 9-13); educ3 = post secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (Canadian born = 0; foreign born = 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Covariate             | Coefficient | Robust Standard Error | z   | P>|z| | 95% Confidence Interval Lower | Upper |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----|------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Married               | 0.034627    | 0.045115              | 0.77| 0.443| -0.0538                     | 0.123051 |
| Female                | -0.21477    | 0.033215              | -6.47| 0.000| -0.27987                    | -0.14967 |
| Foreign born          | -0.40387    | 0.029854              | -13.53| 0.000| -0.46238                    | -0.34536 |
| Having one child      | -0.38599    | 0.039686              | -9.73| 0.000| -0.46377                    | -0.30821 |
| Having 2+ children    | -0.26478    | 0.04935              | -5.37| 0.000| -0.3615                     | -0.16806 |
| Education – Grades 1-8| -0.28775    | 0.176826              | -1.63| 0.104| -0.63432                    | 0.058823 |
| Education – Grades 9-13| -0.17817   | 0.169599              | -1.05| 0.293| -0.51058                    | 0.154239 |
| Education – Post Sec. | -0.06355    | 0.169923              | -0.37| 0.708| -0.39659                    | 0.269498 |
| Age                   | 0.001513    | 0.001436              | 1.05| 0.292| -0.0013                     | 0.004328 |

Table 5B.6 Results from the repeated Cox PH model with marital status and child dummy covariates

The covariate married indicating whether a participant is married (or common-law) or single (including separated, divorced or widowed) was not statistically significant. The gender covariate was statistically significant indicating that the estimated hazard ratio of being female \[\text{Exp}(-0.21477) = .8067; 100(.8067 – 1) = -19.33\] yields an 19 percent decrease in the odds of leaving SA as compared to males.

The foreign born covariate was also statistically significant \[\text{Exp}(-0.40387) = .6677; 100(.6677 – 1) = -33.23\] demonstrating that being foreign born decreases the risk of leaving SA by 33 percent as compared to those Canadian born.
The dummy covariates representing whether participants have children were also statistically significant. The covariate indicating whether a participant has one child produced an odds of .68 \([\text{Exp}(-0.38599) = 0.6798]\) or having one child decreases the likelihood of exiting SA by 32 percent as compared to participants with no children \([100(0.6798 - 1) = -32.02]\). For participants with two or more children the estimated hazard ratio \([\text{Exp}(-0.26478) = 0.7674; 100(0.7674 - 1) = -23.26]\) indicates a 23 percent decrease in the odds of leaving SA as compared to those with no children.

The dummy covariates for education and the continuous covariate age did not produce statistically significant results. To be discussed in the next section, the interaction with time model indicates that none of the statistically significant covariates presented above demonstrate a serious violation of the proportional hazards assumption.

5B.6 Repeated Cox PH Regression with Interactions with Time

As discussed in the previous chapter, time-varying covariates may generate estimates that violate the proportionality assumption. Allison (1995) therefore advocates the introduction of interaction terms of these covariates with time. Again, if the interaction with time for a covariate generates a significant coefficient, we may conclude that the covariate violates the proportionality assumption. Alternatively, if the interaction term for a covariate is not statistically significant, then we may conclude that the assumption has not been violated. Box-Steffensmeier & Zorn (2001) assert that there is as much as a 90 percent reduction in the power of significance tests (power referring to the chance of false negatives or the rejection of true covariate effects) when hazards are not proportionate but diverge. Failing this assumption, the hazard ratios of a particular covariate that increase over time are at risk of being overestimated, yielding inflated estimates, whereas the relative risk is often underestimated or deflated (biased toward zero) for ratios that decrease over time.

Table 5B.7 presents the results from the interaction with time model for the marital status and child dummy covariate model for those covariates that were statistically significant.
Sample size = 3,842 participants; 5,218 spells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates used in the analysis</th>
<th>Variable type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child count</td>
<td>time-dependent; continuous recoded into dummy covariates (no children is the reference category; child1 = 1 child; child2 = 2 or more children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (male = 0; female = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (Canadian born = 0; foreign born = 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Covariate | Coefficient | Robust Standard Error | z   | P>|z| | 95% Confidence Interval | Lower | Upper |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| Time - Female | -.002414    | 0.009925              | -0.24 | 0.808 | -0.02187 - 0.017039      |
| Time- Foreign born | .0031951   | 0.009691              | 0.33 | 0.742 | -0.0158 - 0.022188      |
| Time - 1 child | .004081     | 0.017676              | 0.23 | 0.817 | -0.03056 - 0.038726      |
| Time - 2+ children | .0026849   | 0.009768              | 0.27 | 0.783 | -0.01646 - 0.02183       |

Table 5B.7 Interaction with time for significant covariates in the married and child dummy model

Results from the interaction with time model for the marital status and child dummy covariate model indicate that no covariates are statistically significant and therefore do not pose serious violations of the proportional hazards assumption. Results from the interaction with time model for the revised family structure and education covariates is not presented as none of the covariates in these models yielded statistically significant results.

5B.8 Post Diagnostic Tests

There are a few different ways to test the proportional hazards assumption, several of them using residual analyses. However Martingale and Schoenfeld residuals plots generated to identify covariates’ residuals are generally not informative for dichotomous covariates. As a result, residual plots were not generated as almost all covariates (except the continuous covariate age) utilized in the models were dichotomous/dummy covariates.

Another way of testing the proportional hazards assumption is through a rank test providing Harrell’s rho estimates. Table 5B.8 presents the results from the revised repeated Cox PH model.
Sample size = 3,842 participants; 5,942 spells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates used in the analysis</th>
<th>Variable type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family structure type</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (couples without children is the reference category; family1 = couples with 1 child; family2 = couples with 2 or more children; family3 = singles without children; family4 = singles with 1 child; family5 = singles with 2 or more children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (male = 0; female = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>continuous covariate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (no education is the reference category; edu1 = elementary (Grades 1-8); edu2 = secondary (Grades 9-13); educ3 = post secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (Canadian born = 0; foreign born = 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>( \rho )</th>
<th>( \text{chi}^2 )</th>
<th>degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Prob&gt;( \text{chi}^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couples with one child</td>
<td>-0.00266</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with two or more children</td>
<td>0.00653</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles without children</td>
<td>-0.00382</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with one child</td>
<td>0.01357</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles with two or more children</td>
<td>0.00433</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.05627</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.01751</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>0.13725</td>
<td>103.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Grades 1-13</td>
<td>-0.01029</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Post Secondary</td>
<td>-0.00263</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global test</td>
<td>136.27</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5B.8 Results from the (Harrell’s \( \rho \)) rank test for the revised repeated Cox PH model

The age and foreign born covariates demonstrate statistical significance from the rank test. Consequently, the interaction with time model was checked to determine whether these covariates violate the proportional hazards assumption and to ascertain which estimate (either from the original model or interaction with time model) is more appropriately reported. The foreign born covariate was not significant in the interaction with time model and age was not determined to be a time varying covariate.

Table 5B.9 documents the results of the rank test for the marital status and child dummy model.
Sample size = 3,842 participants; 5,942 spells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates used in the analysis</th>
<th>Variable type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child count</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (no children is the reference category; child1 = 1 child; child2 = 2 or more children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariate (single = 0; married = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (male = 0; female = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>continuous covariate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (no education is the reference category; edu1 = elementary (Grades 1-8); edu2 = secondary (Grades 9-13); educ3 = post secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate (Canadian born = 0; foreign born = 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>rho</th>
<th>chi2</th>
<th>degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Prob&gt;chi2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.00012</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.02409</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>0.14157</td>
<td>105.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having one child</td>
<td>0.02592</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having two or more children</td>
<td>0.0161</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Grades 1-8</td>
<td>-0.02009</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Grades 9-13</td>
<td>-0.01022</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Post Secondary</td>
<td>-0.00342</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.05291</td>
<td>17.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Test</td>
<td>143.77</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5B.9 Results for the rank test (Harrell’s rho) using the married and child dummy covariate model

Upon examination of the table above, the covariate foreign born generated a statistically significant result. The interaction with time model however does not indicate statistical significance; consequently the estimate from the original model is reported.

5B.9 Assumptions for the Repeated Cox PH Regression Models

A number of assumptions must be met to provide unbiased estimates in a repeated survival model. As in any survival model, cases in the sample must be statistically independent. This assumption is violated if any individual appears more than once in the data set. To contend with this violation in a recurrent survival model, variance corrected measures are necessary to
offset the correlation of individuals’ events. Box-Steppensemeier and Jones (2004) assert that models such as the Andersen-Gill approach (in addition to marginal and conditional approaches) provide variance corrected measures to contend with the correlations associated with repeated events. Second, the event must represent an unequivocal change from one mutually exclusive state to another. In the study conducted, one state is identified as entering the SA system; the other state is exiting the system—all observations’ states are mutually exclusive. Third, the independent censoring assumption requires that censoring is random and not related to the probability of event occurrence. Censoring in this model was a purely random process. Fourth, large samples are required for valid hypothesis testing. In the study conducted, the total number of observations was 5,942 total number of SA spells for a sample of 3,842 participants. As in other regression models, covariates ought not to be highly correlated; if they are, these variables introduce multicollinearity. Covariates that displayed multicollinearity with other covariates were eliminated, with the most informative covariate left in the model.

With the numbers of the descriptive snapshot and statistical models presented, how these figures are to be interpreted remains key. The following chapter offers a thorough explanation for what these data mean for SA participants today.
CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

Invariably the most important of the chapters presented in the dissertation, the following discussion provides the interpretation of the findings based on the snapshot of demographic data and the repeated Cox PH models presented in the previous chapter, rooted in social constructionism and critical feminism.

A number of social constructions surrounding SA access paint a damaging picture of lone mothers today. These will be addressed in this discussion, particularly their alignment within the present context and fit with the quantitative findings presented. First the composition of the caseload yields momentous information on how a particular group, namely lone mothers, is targeted for scrutiny. Who are the principal groups of SA participants? What family structures appear most dominant and what does this information indicate about how SA is constructed? What does data on LEAP and addiction services tell us about how the SA participants are appraised? Given that the numbers render a different story than the one constructed by policy makers, the media and the academe, one must question the ideological positions undergirding the welfare dependency paradigm. Recommendations for what narrative might be adopted to replace disparaging social constructions will be presented.

The numbers depicted in the snapshot present data from November 2009. It is important to point out how this time period is a critical one in world history. Manifestly the global economic downturn in 2009 markedly inflated the numbers on assistance, as would be expected given the recession’s deleterious hit on individuals and families who, up until that time, likely comprised members of the working poor. The ebb and flow of the economy however demonstrates just how vulnerable individuals are to undulations in the labour force. The rise in numbers on the welfare rolls underscores how inadequate social programs are in assisting individuals to contend with market oscillations. The difficulties associated with getting by on one’s own are only compounded when there are more mouths to feed and less to go around. Thus
economic and structural barriers certainly contribute to groups’ vulnerability and difficulty in scraping by, triggering the need to access income assistance programs like OW.

6.1 Caseload Composition

The caseload snapshot revealed a number of critical findings. The total number of the caseload has not seen massive change over recent years, remaining at approximately 200 000 cases each year. Female composition has remained relatively stable since 2003, albeit climbing in 2009/2010 as a result of the global recession. At the same time, male OW participation has been steadily rising over the years, also intensifying in 2009. The spike in numbers from 2009 to 2010 acutely demonstrates just how low income individuals and families are immediately susceptible to significant changes in the economy. Rising unemployment and inadequate income assistance programs contribute to individuals’ precariousness; many forced to the welfare rolls as the last recourse to weather economic storms.

As stated, the caseload has remained relatively stable over the last decade, lingering at roughly 200 000 cases. While the 1990s ushered in the ‘tough love’ approach to workfare aimed at reducing the welfare rolls, what is important to note is that on the whole the overall population of 13 014 000 people (Statistics Canada, 2010) in Ontario do not access the system. Only a very small minority of residents (roughly 200 000) or .015 percent of the population are forced to enter the SA system after having exhausted all resources, and even then, access is temporary (Bane & Ellwood, 1994; Cooke, 2009)—not long-lasting dependency. Putting the SA system into context then, only a very minute proportion of the population receives SA, the few that do, do so sporadically for short periods. What is it about this minority of people that makes leaving the SA system so difficult?

As stated earlier, the focus on lone mothers as the main culprit of SA usage is to some extent misguided. In the snapshot of data we observe that females only marginally access OW more than their male counterparts. Of the total caseload in November 2009 (N = 236 219), female applicants totaled 126 861 cases (54 percent of total) while male applicants accounted for 109 357 cases (46 percent). The total number of females exceeded males by a margin of 17 504 cases.
6.2 Spell Length

Stewart and Dooley (1999) found average spell lengths to be 17 months using data from 1990-1994. The data presented here (2004-2009) however indicate that participants now experience shorter spell lengths than roughly a decade ago. The overall average length of stay in this study was 12 months and median 8 months. The mean spell length for males was 11 months and (median 7 months) the average spell length for females was 15 months (median 10 months). The mean spell length for singles without children was the shortest at 11 months (median 7 months), while singles with two children had the longest stays at an average of 17 months (median 10 months). The next longest spell lengths were experienced by singles with one child (mean 16 months, median 10 months) followed by couples with three or more children (mean 15 months, median 9 months), couples with two children (mean 14 months, median 9 months) and couples with one child with an average of 14 months (median 10 months). Somewhat surprisingly, singles with three or more children had shorter stays with a mean of 13 months (median 9 months) than couples with children.

The average spell length for participants who were married (common-law) was 14 months (median 9 months) and for singles (separated, divorced or widowed) the mean spell length was 12 months (median 7 months). In terms of immigration or citizenship status, Canadian born participants had average spells of 11 months (median 6 months) while foreign born participants had longer spells of 15 months (median 10 months).

The claim that welfare dependency involves long term, chronic access is clearly flawed. On the whole, participants had a mean stay of 12 months, just over a year in length and on average encountered one and half spells on SA (median one spell). Unsurprising given the multitude of constraints on women, females’ spell lengths tend to be slightly longer (average 15 months) vis-à-vis mens’ (average 11 months). Singles without children had the shortest average stays (average 11 months). With no child or family related expenditures these individuals are perhaps less encumbered by the constraints which would lead to longer stays on SA. Singles with two children had the longest spell lengths (mean 17 months, median 10 months). The literature abounds on the multiplicity of barriers encountered by this population, particularly in relation to the plight of the lone mother (i.e. lack of childcare, the wage gap, barriers to employment in
motherhood, etc.). Couples with three or more children, with two children or one child experienced longer stays, again likely related to issues posed with the additional costs of raising children.

What is interesting in the numbers on spell lengths is (1) that singles with three or more children had shorter stays than couples with children and (2) married participants had longer stays than single participants. Perhaps the high costs of raising multiple children (on limited SA benefit amounts) forces single parents into employment (precarious as it may be) at a faster rate than couples with children who may have other sources from which to draw from (it should be noted however that the number of singles with three or more children accounted for only two percent of all family structure types in the sample). There was also a much smaller number of married participants (15 percent of the sample) as compared to single participants (85 percent of the sample). While the data indicate that married participants had longer stays on average (14 months) than single participants (12 months), the two month disparity does not represent vastly different spell lengths. Potentially having two adults in the household may provide resources which one individual may not have access to, facilitating married participants longer stays compared to single participants who may be propelled off the system and into the labour force, many times, taking contractual, low paying or seasonal employment to make ends meet.

6.3 Gender

Unequivocally, gender is a fundamental variable in studies on SA. Indisputably being female makes it more difficult to exit SA than for males. In the repeated Cox PH revised family structure model, females showed a decrease of 26 percent (or 19 percent decrease in the marital status model) in the odds of leaving SA as compared to males. Moreover, the caseload in November 2009 revealed that women (total of 126,861) form a greater proportion of SA participants than men (total of 109,357) by a margin of 17,504. The literature is awash with studies detailing the economic precariousness of women vis-à-vis men, many of these detrimental barriers are documented in the dissertation. What is interesting to note is the rising growth of male participation, particularly single males without children.
While gender remains a fundamental aspect of SA participation, it continues to be overlooked in gender-neutral SA policy (Gazso, 2009a). SA has increasingly been tied to an individual responsibility model of the family, with the nuclear family unit assumed. At the same time, the experiences of mothers and fathers within this model are understood to be similar. As a result, the relationships and work related to the maintenance of the family is not calculated in such a model—ultimately engendering entirely disparate outcomes and experiences for male vis-à-vis female participants. Moreover the complexity of the numerous intersections of difference is oft negated. Women representing particular racial identities experience SA differently. As noted, Swift and Birmingham (2000) found that Somali immigrants had not internalized the stigma associated with SA access as Canadian born participants had. However how do other racialized women experience SA? The lack of data available on the ethnic makeup of the Ontario caseload makes it difficult to investigate how women from different racial backgrounds experience SA—if they are able to access SA at all given rigid eligibility criteria which constricts SA access for specific immigrant populations. The collection and analysis of data on such important aspects of participant identities is recommended, albeit improbable given the current policy context (i.e. the thinning of Canadian Census data provides a key case in point). The research study presented does not allow for an analysis on the multiplicity of intersections (i.e. women of different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, etc.) of SA participants and how these intersections impact participants’ experiences of SA access. In the absence of data that might facilitate a more accurate challenge to extant social constructions of women, and in particular racialized women, damaging constructions continue unrestrained.

6.4 Family Structure

In terms of family structure, the numbers reveal an interesting divergent trend that the traditional focus on lone mother tends to obscure. The prevalence of single females with children (68 287 cases or 29 percent of the total) vis-à-vis single males with children (5 018 cases or 2 percent) is quite apparent. Thus the assertion that lone mothers comprise a dominant family structure in the caseload is indeed true when evaluating the totality of cases in November 2009. However, the family structure type single males without children (89 169 participants or 38 percent) exceeds the lone mother structure type (47 630 participants or 20 percent) in the caseload. Here is one instance where mainstream literature’s focus on the lone mother as the main culprit of SA access
may not fit the current reality; analyses which continue to point to lone mothers as the dominant family structure type, in exclusion of all other family structures, obfuscates the fact that lone males without children currently dominates the caseload. Indeed it is here where one of the differences between American literature (focusing on the lone mother due to prior eligibility restrictions) and Canadian research emerges. Many Canadian researchers continue to focus on the lone mother group (see for example Caragata, 2009; Fortin et al., 1999; Gazso, 2009a; Lefebvre & Merrigan, 1998; Myles et al., 2007; Richards, 2010) although further research is needed examining the trends of other populations on SA. That being said, the ideology and some of the design elements of Canada’s (and more particularly Ontario’s) SA structure has followed the American lead in welfare reform; for example, the Ontario Works Act was highly influenced by Wisconsin Works (Herd, 2002). As a result, the dissertation documents some of the salient studies originating from the US that come to bear upon notions of welfare dependency which have been (and continue to be) advanced in Canada.

Statistics from Canada show somewhat of a different trend than what we observe on SA in terms of family structure. The largest family structure type in Canada (accounting for families only, not single or mixed households) in 2006 was couples with children, comprising 45.9 percent of all family types, followed by couples with no children at 39.6 percent. Lone parent families comprised 14.5 percent, 2.8 percent of these headed by males and 11.7 percent headed by females. In terms of household structure, the vast majority of Canadians live in family households (69.6 percent), whereas 26.8 percent live alone and 3.7 percent live with one or more unrelated persons (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family structure</th>
<th>in thousands</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total families</td>
<td>9,486</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with no children</td>
<td>3,752</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3,044</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with children</td>
<td>4,358</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact families</td>
<td>3,855</td>
<td>40.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3,438</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step families</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trend is similar in Ontario in terms of family structure (once more families only, not single or mixed households) where couples with children represented 49.2 percent of all families and couples without children comprised 36 percent. Again we observe lone parent families represented only 14.8 percent (12 percent of these headed by females and 2.9 percent headed by males) of all family structure types in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). One person households accounted for 24.3 percent, 31.8 percent were 2 person households, 16.5 percent were 3 person households, 16.9 percent were 4 person households and 10.5 percent were 5 or more person households. The rising population of people living alone reflects a growing number of individuals aged 65 and over who live alone (around a quarter) in 2006, higher still for the 75 years and over age group, 34.4 percent of whom lived alone (Ministry of Finance, 2009).

### Table 6.1 Family structure types in Canada in 2006 by thousands and percentage


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family structure</th>
<th>in thousands</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended families</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her children</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His children</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total married couples (with children)</td>
<td>3,698</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total common-law couples (with children)</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone-parent families</td>
<td>1,376</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male parent</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female parent</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family structure</th>
<th>in thousands</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total families</td>
<td>3,679</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with no children</td>
<td>1,325</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with children</td>
<td>1,809</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact families</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1,550</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step families</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended families</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her children</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His children</td>
<td>25E</td>
<td>0.7E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total married couples (with children)</td>
<td>1,665</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total common-law couples (with children)</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone-parent families</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.2 Family structure types in Ontario in 2006 by thousands and percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male parent</th>
<th>Female parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These numbers appear to indicate that the lone father group is similar in the SA population (2 percent) in comparison to the general population (2.9 percent) of family types in Ontario (families only, not the total number of households in Ontario). The lone mother group (29 percent) on SA is significantly higher than the general population of families in Ontario at 12 percent (again this accounts for family structures only, not private households). Moreover, the percentage of single males (38 percent) is overrepresented in the SA population when compared to the 24.3 percent of one person households in the general population of Ontario. Again, the figures presented provide data with which to contrast the overall general population with the SA population but do not provide an equal comparison. A direct comparison between these populations is not feasible as (1) the data presented represents family structure types only, not information on all household types; and (2) the data on family structure types is from a 100 percent sample whereas the data on households is taken from a 20 percent sample.

The largest family structure type accessing OW in November 2009 was singles without children at the 0-3 month access range. Singles without children (58 percent) remained the leading family structure in all month range durations, followed by singles with children (31 percent). It is interesting to note that although singles without children comprise the greatest proportion of cases in the early month ranges of access, singles with children occupy the greater share of cases in the longest durations of access (36-59 and 60+ month ranges). This trend demonstrates how structural barriers impeding lone parents make it exceedingly difficult for families to leave the system over the long haul. With another income earner in the household, one’s ability to leave the system is greatly improved. Not surprisingly, couples without children represent the least number of cases (3 percent), followed by couples with children (8 percent).

In Charette and Meng’s (1994) study, the authors found that the presence of pre-school aged children greatly increased participants’ risk of SA participation. In terms of exit rates, these findings are confirmed by Cooke (2009) who found that lone mothers exit SA more slowly (roughly 33 percent more slowly) than other family structure types. Barrett and Cragg (1998)
also found that the presence of children had a dramatic effect on exit rates with couples having a higher exit rate than single fathers, while lone fathers exit faster than lone mothers. The exit rate was nearly the same for couples whether they had children or not.

The models presented support the literature that having children poses detrimental barriers for individuals’ ability to leave the system. In the revised repeated Cox regression model, couples with two or more children were at a 17 percent decreased odds of exiting SA, singles with one child had a 16 percent decrease and singles with two or more children demonstrated an 11 percent decrease in the odds of leaving SA when compared to the reference category couples with no children. There could be a few different explanations for the lower odds of leaving SA for participants with more children than those with fewer (one to two) children. First, if being young contributes to decreased odds of exiting SA, then perhaps those with fewer children are young and influenced by the effect of age, while older participants (which is more likely with more children) are not influenced by this effect. Moreover, participants are more likely to have older children if they have a greater number of them which could also play a role in increasing their chances of leaving the system, while participants with young children may be less likely to leave the system when the burden of care is most greatly felt. This explanation resonates with the finding by Charette and Meng (1994) that the presence of pre-school-aged children substantially increases the probability of SA participation.

6.5 Age

Data on the age ranges of participants also yields noteworthy information on the SA caseload. The dominant group for both genders in November 2009 was SA participants in the 20-24 age range. Where the numbers diverge are in the younger age group (ages 16-19 years) where females dominate the caseload, and the older age ranges where males surpass females (ages 45-49, 50-54, 55-59 and 60-64 years). Poverty thus has different trajectories for men than for women. Here we see that females tend to enter the system during their younger years, while males access SA much later in life.

In terms of SA access, the highest proportion of female participants accessed SA for the shortest duration (0-3 months and 4-6 months) at the 20-24 age range and females participating
for the longest duration (60+ months) were from the 35-39 age group. The highest proportion of males on SA at the shortest durations of SA use (0-3 months) were from the 20-24 age range, followed by males in the 25-29 age range, whereas the longest durations of SA access (36-59 months, 60+ months) were occupied most by males ages 45-49, 50-54, 55-59 and 60-64 years. These findings indicate that SA access is most prevalent for females in their younger years, a time when women are only beginning their career trajectories and engaged in myriad social reproduction activities. Male access, however, appears to be dominant later in life or at the end of their careers. The lasting impact of entering the SA system at a young age however is hardest felt by women, positioning them potentially for a lifetime of hardship and poverty.

In the revised repeated Cox PH model, the age covariate indicated that for every additional year of age, the hazard of exiting SA increases by .3 percent, a marginal difference from zero. In the marital status and child dummy model, age did not achieve statistical significance. Cooke (2009) also found the effect of each additional year to be only slight, albeit his model indicated that age decreased the rate of exit from SA. Given that the dominant group for SA usage for both genders in November 2009 was participants in the 20-24 age range, the model seems to support that leaving the system may be difficult, if only slightly, for younger participants than their older counterparts. Potentially, the pull from both sides, the younger and older age groups, may be neutralizing the effect of age.

McMullin, Davies and Cassidy (2002) highlight the negative ramifications of becoming a mother on SA, heightened when the mother is young, single and pregnant. In their sample of low-income mothers, many left home as teenagers, experienced their first birth at a young age, demonstrated limited education, showed a weak attachment to the labour force (sic) and were SA participants. The literature amply supports these findings that young, unskilled and under educated participants have difficulty securing gainful employment.

On the other hand, the numbers from November 2009 would indicate that the massive layoffs associated with the recent recession have specifically harmed older, displaced workers. Scott (1996), for example, discusses how recessions (i.e. the recession of the 1980s and the recession of 1990-92) have the propensity to displace older workers, while at the same time
negatively affecting young people with low skills levels and short work histories. Rogers and O’Rourke (n.d.) also note the steady increase in job displacement for workers over 44 years. Morisette, Zhang and Frenette (2007) find, for example, that technological advances, increased trade liberalization and shifting consumer preferences have generated significant economic adjustments which have resulted in business closures and the displacement of workers. Accordingly to a report by Human Resources Development Canada (1999) workers displaced by structural change experience even greater barriers than unemployed persons, particularly hard felt by older workers. Older workers tend to experience longer unemployment durations than younger workers and face employment and training barriers their young counterparts do not encounter, i.e. skill sets no longer in demand; lower levels of literacy or educational attainment; less willingness to travel geographically (HRDC, 1999); lack of experience in the job search; negative stereotyping about the productivity of older workers (ageism); and job related training programs geared towards younger adults, not towards older workers (HRDC, 1999; Rogers & O’Rourke, n.d.). It would appear that the relatively slight effect of age on the SA exit rate might be explained by these two populations, the younger and older age groups, both encountering difficulty exiting the SA system.

6.6 Marital Status

Studies have shown that if a lone mother has been previously married, her rate of exit from SA increases (Charette & Meng, 1994; Cooke, 2009; O’Neill, Bassi & Wolf, 1987; Stewart & Dooley, 1999), likely as a result of spousal benefits. O’Neill and colleagues (1987) obtained this result although also included whether the woman became a mother as a teenager but did not find a significant effect, and Cooke (2009), who found that age at first marriage did not significantly affect the length of time individuals accessed SA.

Clearly having other sources of revenue (i.e. another income in the household) makes a profound impact on whether an individual is able to leave SA. The data from the demographic snapshot indicate the dearth of participants on SA that have a partner, only 6 806 participants or 3 percent of the caseload in November 2009 were couples without children and 19 309 participants or 8 percent were couples with children. Surprisingly however the repeated Cox regression models did not yield statistically significant results for the married covariate
indicating whether a participant is single (separated, divorced or widowed) or married (or common-law). Significant results were realized however from the variety of family structure types presented in the revised model.

6.7  Child Count

Studies have shown that the presence of children in the household may impact upon one’s ability to exit SA. Sandefur and Cook (1998) find that women who have two or more children before or after they begin receiving SA are far less likely to exit the system. In a study of mothers accessing SA conducted by Smith (1998), mothers made well reasoned arguments to remain full time caregivers to their preschool children. The mothers were adamant that there could be no work without childcare and they would choose to remain on SA rather than leave their children with unregulated providers or in poor quality childcare.

In the repeated Cox PH model using marital status and child dummy covariates, participants with one child have decreased odds of exiting SA by 32 percent while participants with two or more children have a 23 percent decrease likelihood of leaving SA as compared to those with no children. From the revised family structure model, singles with one child had a 16 percent decreased odds of exiting, while singles with two or more children had an 11 percent decreased odds of leaving SA relative to couples with no children. These data confirm Sandefur and Cook’s (1998) findings that women with children (in their study, two or more children) are far less likely to exit the system than those without children. Barrett and Cragg (1998) also found this to be the case, noting that exit rates are lower for single fathers and mothers than for single men and women without children.

Unequivocally childcare costs are a critical determinant of whether or not parents, and mothers in particular, are able to enter the labour force (Mason, 2003). The pursuit of regulated childcare presents significant barriers to employment for lone mothers on SA, often such that “work does not pay” (Mason, 2003, p. 48). As a result, Mason (2003) asserts that lone mothers’ employment decisions are more sensitive to childcare costs (and those associated with a higher cost of living) than the decisions of married mothers. While childcare subsidies are purportedly made available to parents on SA, there are a multitude of problems with this system in Ontario,
chiefly that the number of subsidies available is far below that of eligible applicants. At the same time, regulated childcare has been the focus of relentless cutbacks. In cases where women lack higher education or employment experience, many are relegated to minimum wage jobs. Without subsidies for childcare, low paid labour simply may not be financially viable. Minimum wage employment or jobs that are insecure, part-time, temporary or seasonal generally do not meet the needs of lone mothers and their families. Thus women swing from periods of poverty on SA to periods of poverty as part of the working poor. If employment and suitable childcare arrangements are secured, lone mothers enter a period of substantial change and acute stress, generally due to unpredictable crises (i.e. needing to work late or tend to a sick child). If the mother works for an employer that does not promote a family friendly working environment or in cases where the mother does not have support networks to draw from, many are forced to withdraw from the workforce, many describing themselves as severely depressed or stressed (Mason, 2003). Hence lone mothers cycle between employment and SA access, using SA as one—of many—strategies to get by.

6.8 Immigration

The MCSS does not ask applicants for information on their race or ethnicity, thus it was not feasible to provide details pertaining to the ethno-specific makeup of the caseload, nor was it possible to report on all categories of immigrants given that not all immigration categories identified by Citizenship and Immigration Canada are collected by MCSS and reflected in the data. The OW Act does make clear that

The following persons are not eligible for assistance:

1. Subject to subsection (2), a person,
   i. against whom a deportation order has been made under the Immigration Act (Canada),
   or with respect to whom a departure order or an exclusion order under that Act has become effective, or
   ii. with respect to whom a removal order has become enforceable under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada).
2. A person who is a visitor, unless the person,
   i. has made a claim for refugee status under the Immigration Act (Canada),
ii. has made a claim for refugee protection under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada), or

iii. has made an application for status as a permanent resident under the *Immigration Act* (Canada) or the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada).

3. A person who is a tourist.

(2) Paragraph 1 of subsection (1) does not apply with respect to a person if the administrator is satisfied that,

(a) for reasons wholly beyond the control of the person, the person is unable to leave the country; or

(b) the person has made an application for status as a permanent resident on the basis of humanitarian or compassionate considerations, as referred to in subsection 114 (2) of the *Immigration Act* (Canada) or subsection 25 (1) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) [Government of Ontario, Ontario Works Act, O. Reg. 134/98, s. 6 (2); O. Reg. 395/04, s. 2 (2)].

Consequently, visitors, tourists, immigrants with no legal status (who have not pursued a refugee claim or Humanitarian and Compassionate status) or who have a deportation order in effect (who cannot leave the country for reasons beyond their control) are not eligible for SA in Ontario.

Presented below are a number of Canadian studies on SA receipt by immigrants, however, it is important to note that there is considerable variation in eligibility from province to province for different immigrant categories. Sadly only a paucity of studies have been conducted on immigrant populations and SA participation, many now quite dated. Picot and Hou (2003) discuss a study based on 1986 and 1991 data which found that immigrants, regardless of length of residence in Canada, participate less in unemployment insurance and SA than Canadian-born residents, albeit participation in these programs increased with years in Canada (Basavarajappa & Halli, 1997, as cited in Picot & Hou, 2003). In contrast however Thomas and Rappak (1998), utilizing data from the 1994 Canadian Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), found immigrants receive more in SA and more in workers compensation than the Canadian-born, and Baker and Benjamin (1995), in their study over a decade ago, found that recent cohorts of immigrants tend to use more social transfers than earlier cohorts. This is confirmed by Omidvar
and Richmond (2003) who note that immigrants in Canada have a higher incidence of poverty and rely more on SA than their predecessors, despite possessing higher levels of education in all immigration categories as compared to the Canadian born. Notwithstanding these differences, Picot and Hou (2003) contend that there is significant variation in participation across source regions and immigrant classes; for example, refugees and family class immigrants tend to receive more than independent immigrants. The demographic snapshot in the study presented documents this trend.

Refugee claimants form the largest contender for OW receipt (17,169 of 23,233 or 74 percent of immigration caseload) vis-à-vis other immigrant status categories. At the same time attempting to demonstrate that they do not need assistance from the government (important in garnering permanent resident status\(^3\)), many are compelled to apply for assistance in spells of unemployment if they have no social support networks to draw from. As a consequence, this population remains a highly marginalized population at a higher risk of SA access.

The minimal (3,513 participants of 23,233 in immigration caseload or 15 percent) participation of family class immigrants is not astonishing given that in order to immigrate to Canada in the family class category the immigrant family must be sponsored by an individual in Canada. The sponsoring individual is responsible for ensuring that sponsored family members have the wherewithal to get by without accessing SA. The Government of Canada indicates that to be a sponsor:

You and the sponsored relative must sign a sponsorship agreement that commits you to provide financial support for your relative, if necessary. This agreement also says the person becoming a permanent resident will make every effort to support her or himself.

You must provide financial support for a spouse, common-law or conjugal partner for three years from the date they become a permanent resident.

You must provide financial support for a dependent child for 10 years, or until the child turns 25, whichever comes first (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009).

\(^3\) While SA receipt is an obstacle in garnering permanent resident status, it is not to a finding of refugee status (these are two different processes).
The length of sponsorship for a spouse is three years (formerly 10 years) and ten years for other family class members. The overwhelming majority of those sponsored to come to Canada as members of the family class receive their permanent resident status before arriving in Canada. If the sponsor family fails to provide for the family they have agreed to sponsor, they are not eligible to sponsor relatives in the future. Sponsors aspiring to sponsor future relatives may be unable to if in the past “they have received government financial assistance for reasons other than a disability” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009).

In cases of sponsorship breakdown (only constituted if a sponsored member requires SA, not if they are self sustaining through employment) where the sponsor is unable or unwilling to provide the basic needs of the sponsored member(s), the sponsor would be considered to be in sponsorship default and would be required to pay back any SA payments provided to the sponsored member(s) (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, undated). However it is the responsibility of the sponsored member to make a concerted effort to prevent sponsorship breakdown. In this regard, administrators have much discretion:

…(A) member of a benefit unit is making reasonable efforts to obtain compensation or realize a financial resource or income that the person may be entitled to or eligible for, the administrator may determine that the person is not eligible for basic financial assistance or reduce the amount of basic financial assistance granted by the amount of the compensation, financial resource or income that in his or her opinion is available or would have been available had reasonable efforts been made to obtain or realize it (Government of Ontario, Ontario Works Act, O. Reg. 134/98, s. 13 (1).

Thus, if the administrator is not satisfied that the SA participant is making ‘reasonable efforts’ to obtain compensation from their sponsor, they could be cut off from financial support. This leaves participants particularly vulnerable to abuse in relation to the sponsor, and the administrator. In fact, Mosher (2009) notes that up until December 2004, a SA participant who was under a sponsorship agreement would automatically have $100 deducted from their benefits, as administrators inferred this amount would be allocated to them from their sponsor.
In terms of education levels, refugee claimants, permanent residents and immigrants that have acquired Canadian citizenship have education levels clustered around the upper secondary (Grade 12) and post-secondary levels. Although forming a much smaller proportion of the overall caseload, immigrants present higher percentages of applicants with secondary and post secondary education than applicants not identified in the prescribed OW immigration categories. Indeed post secondary education was higher for participants in the immigration caseload (29 percent) in comparison to participants in the overall caseload (22 percent). The overall SA caseload and immigration caseload do not depict an illiterate, uneducated population. In the general caseload, 71 percent of participants had above a Grade 11 education. Further research is needed however to more fully compare the education levels of the complete continuum of immigrants and refugees with Canadian born residents.

Again, a full comparison between Canadian born and immigrant SA applicants is not feasible given that OW administrators do not collect information on immigration status from all applicants. However there appears to be only a minority of immigrants in the immigration cube (N = 23 233) representing .098 percent within the overall caseload cube (N = 239 219). Although a full comparison is not feasible for this analysis, it does appear from the data available that one’s immigration status plays a critical role in predicting SA exits. Indeed, the repeated Cox PH regression models (both the revised family structure and marital status models) indicate that the relative risk of exiting SA decreases by 33 percent as compared to those Canadian born.

The barriers confronting immigrants are innumerable: recognition of foreign credentials; degree and length of experience abroad and within Canada; language barriers; varying concentrations of social networks; and knowledge of and information about the Canadian labour market (Gilmore, 2009) to name but a few. Gilmore (2009) reveals that immigrants who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years have both lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates than Canadian born residents. This disparity dissipates for immigrants who landed 10 years prior to the Labour Force Survey (2006-2007 data upon which the study is based) yielding rates generally comparable to their Canadian born counterparts. While the majority (80 percent) of working-age immigrants find employment during their first two years of
arrival in Canada, only 42 percent attained a job in their intended occupation (Statistics Canada, 2005).

At the same time acknowledging that SA access for immigrants might be more prevalent than the caseload numbers would suggest, the argument that this population seeks refuge in Canada in order to access welfare services is clearly flawed (Arat-Koc, 1999; O’Connell, 2009). While SA receipt for some immigrants is the only option in times of desperate need, it comes at a high price. Sponsored immigrants compelled to access the system jeopardize their sponsors from bringing other relatives to Canada in the future and refugees accessing OW are not regarded positively by Citizenship and Immigration limiting their chances of permanent residency.

6.9 Education Level

Charette and Meng’s (1994) study of female heads of households in Canada found that higher levels of education result in lower probabilities of SA participation. More specifically, Barrett’s (2000) study in New Brunswick found that educational attainment had a much greater impact on SA exit rates for women than for men. Male participants generally had low levels of education (roughly half had 0–9 years of schooling) accompanied by a low welfare exit rate, while the exit rate patterns for males with high school level education were similar to males with post secondary education. For women, further education was associated with progressively shorter and fewer stays on SA. Individuals who did not complete high school and those with a post secondary education had an exit rate which was not statistically significantly different from that of high school graduates (Barrett, 2000).

However Ontario is not the same as New Brunswick. OW clientele appear to be more educated relative to the New Brunswick caseload. In this study, 52,923 of the total caseload [N = 239,219] or 22 percent had post secondary education in November 2009; whereas in Barrett’s (2000) sample (from 1986-1993) only 8 percent of men and 11 percent of women had obtained a post secondary education. Given a more educated caseload, the dynamics of SA access may not be the same as findings might suggest in the New Brunswick data. It is important that in the pursuit of social regularities in quantitative research (Babbie, 2007), population, ecological and
temporal validity be taken into account. That is, does the sample represent the populations to which the findings of a given phenomenon are applied? Are study results transferable across settings? (Cormack, 2000) These questions linger as one applies findings across disparate social, political and economic environments.

Cooke (2009) cogently argues that if it is true that education (and work experience) does not improve women’s exit rates (or at least does not have a strong effect), then the policy reforms introducing mandatory work and training programs have been “misguided” (Cooke, 2009, p. 203). This may indeed be the case. In Cooke’s study examining SA receipt using data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics from 1996 to 2001, the author did not find that educational level (or in fact previous work experience) to be significant in influencing SA exits. In his repeated Cox PH model, Cooke presents two sets of findings: one for the total observed duration (1996 -2001) and one for the first observed spell. For the total observed duration, Cooke found education levels to be not statistically significant. All education levels for first observed spell were also not statistically significant except one: having less than a secondary school education decreased the rate of exit by fifteen percent. Similar to Cooke’s (2009) findings, the repeated Cox models presented did not produce statistically significant results that education affects the rate of exit off SA. However while education may not have a significant effect on SA exits, it may play a role in propelling individuals onto the system. A study using a competing risk, two state (on and off SA) model might help to tease out whether education level does indeed affect participants’ entries onto SA.

6.10 Participant Earnings

The average amount earned by all family structure types in November 2009 was $680.65, with couples with children earning the most ($890.35) and singles without children the lowest ($457.10). Interestingly, males tended to earn less that month than did their female counterparts overall. In fact in all family structures, except couples with children, females had higher reported earnings than males. The finding that females tend to fare worse than males when in conjugal partnerships is unsurprising, confirmed by studies by the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2004) and Townson (2000), even when these applicants are on SA and are, at that time, not part of the labour force where they are additionally constrained by demands on their
time (affecting the number of hours they are able to work) and the relentless gender income gap (Drolet, 2001). What is remarkable here is that females fare somewhat better than their male counterparts in all other family structure types except when in partnerships.

6.11 SA Benefit Amounts

Much debate has surrounded the notion that more generous SA benefits lead to a swelling of the rolls (for studies suggesting higher benefits lead to employment disincentives, see Lindbeck, 1995; Moffitt, 1981, 1992, 2002). In Canada, Lemieux and Milligan (2006) examine the consequence of lowering SA payments for a particular SA population in Quebec, namely less educated males without children, ages 25-39. The authors found that more ‘generous’ SA benefits reduced the employment rate of all men in their sample by about one percentage point (Lemieux & Milligan, 2006). There does appear to be evidence to support the notion that increasing SA benefits leads to enlarged caseloads.

Stewart and Dooley (1999) also find that the length of spells (both on SA and off SA) are quite sensitive to benefit rates. A finding confirmed by Barrett (1996) who found that for lone mothers, benefit rates are negatively related to (meaning increased on SA spell lengths) with higher SA benefits. Fortin, Lacroix and Thibault’s (1997) study in Quebec demonstrate similar inverse results, a decrease in SA benefits are conducive to faster exits rates and longer periods off SA.

Klassen and Buchanan (2006) assert however that the decision making behind the setting of SA levels has much to do with ideological positioning. Key decisions about SA—such as eligibility criteria and benefit levels—are “ultimately ideological, not ones on which the government, participants and advocates would ever agree” (Klassen & Buchanan, 2006, p. 208). The centre and left wing positions have traditionally held that SA benefits should be high enough to provide protection from the deleterious effects of poverty, while the position of the right has been to force participants to engage in the labour force in order to become self-reliant. Klassen and Buchanan’s (2006) historical account of the policy decisions surrounding SA in Ontario provides a compelling case that the setting of SA rates is highly influenced by a complex interaction of policy, ideology and economy.
In the fall of 1990, the New Democratic Party won on an election platform calling for an increase in SA to ensure that the program provided a real social safety net. Indeed two of the first decisions taken by the government were to increase benefits (a maximum increase of 10.4 percent for single employable participants in 1991) and extend eligibility for the Supports to Employment Program (STEP) allowing more income to be earned by participants without affecting one’s SA benefits. Upon the Conservative rise to power, aghast with the enormity of the caseload they had inherited, the government made slashing SA benefits (by 21.6 percent) one of its first political manoeuvres—even though the caseload had actually begun its decline under the NDP in 1995. With continued economic and labour market growth, the caseload continued to fall. By the end of 2003, benefits remained at the 1995 level and were actually 17 percent lower in constant dollars than what was originally proposed by the Conservative’s in 1995. As a result, there appears a vast disconnect between SA policy and broader economic conditions. Klassen and Buchanan (2006) aver that adjustments to increase benefits and widen eligibility (especially in urban areas where the cost of living has soared) could have been made by the Tory government in 2000-2003 without enlarging the caseload.

The Liberals rise to power in June 2003 included a promise to increase SA rates in correspondence with higher costs of living; however, this commitment was quickly postponed in favour of economic parsimony. The modest increases (2-3 percent) that have been extended under Liberal leadership have contributed little to improving the quality of life or health outcomes for SA participants (Lightman, Herd & Mitchell, 2008). The United Way (2004) notes that the minor incremental increases to SA over the years are losing ground to inflation, leaving participants in intensified levels of poverty. Consequently many continue to decry the declining standard of living for participants under rates that are alarmingly low (Lightman, Mitchell & Wilson, 2009; National Council of Welfare, 2008). Most econometric models do not take these important considerations into account. The setting of SA benefit rates, the impact of inflation and the resulting toll that maintaining low levels has on participants’ health and quality of life must be considered.
6.12 Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO)

“(D)ifficulties with determining absolute poverty lines in an objective manner, mean that the composition of a minimally-adequate basket of goods and services cannot be separated from the social environment in which people live and involve value judgments on the definition of adequacy” (Adema, 2006, p. 18).

Adema (2006) asserts that Canadian income support levels are not determined by a defined socially acceptable standard of living, nor benefits levels associated with objective measures of poverty (i.e. LICOs). Rather, SA levels have been set politically with reference to government budgets and the desire to “ensure that benefit levels do not generate a standard of living that exceeds or even matches that of a working household” (Adema, 2006, p. 19); a statement acutely reminiscent of the less eligibility principle in the British Poor Laws whereby poor relief “on the whole shall not be made really or apparently as eligible as the independent labourer of the lowest class” (Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operations of the Poor Laws, Fellowes, London, 1834, p. 228, as cited in Townsend, 1979, p. 923).

Living in a neighbourhood of poverty appears to have an influence on SA participation. This finding is consistent with other studies (see the United Way’s (2004) Poverty by Postal Code), particularly the finding that ‘neighbourhood effects’ play a crucial role in the perpetuation of poverty and outcomes detrimental to one’s health (United Way, 2004), which given the evidence, can be extended to affect SA receipt. Consideration of the impact of poverty levels in neighbourhoods (or socio-spatial units) in future studies is recommended in order to examine how these important effects bear upon SA usage.

6.13 Unemployment Rate

With increased wages, people are able to sustain themselves and their families far better than when living wages are set at low levels. Other studies have also found that a higher minimum wage decreases SA entry and increases SA exits (i.e. Cooke, 2009; Stewart & Dooley, 1999). That being said, the study by Fortin, Lacroix and Thibault (1999) suggests that this interpretation
may not be as simple as it may initially seem. While an increase to the minimum wage may allow more individuals to enter the labour market because of higher wages, it may also enlarge labour costs for firms which hire low skilled workers, leading to reduced labour demand and increases in SA spell durations for these individuals.

As the unemployment rate rises, we would expect the SA rate to also rise. This was found to be the case in other studies on SA usage (Cooke, 2009; Fortin et al., 1999; Kneebone & White, 2009; O’Neill, Bassi & Wolf, 1987; Stewart & Dooley, 1999). Kneebone and White (2009) estimated a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate increases the SA rate by 0.12 percentage points after one year. The authors also report that American studies generally report that a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate leads to a 5-6 percent increase in the number of SA participants after two to four years (Bell, 2001, as cited in Kneebone & White, 2009). They conclude that SA remains quite sensitive to economic fluctuations and that the reduction in caseloads that resulted in the boom years of the late 1990s and early 2000s will likely rise with the next economic downturn.

One important way of investigating the effects of the unemployment rate on SA is to examine the other highly related program of income assistance, the federally administered program of unemployment insurance/employment insurance (UI/EI), which like OW has encountered significant restructuring over recent years. In the 1990s the Canadian government made important changes to EI which reduced eligibility and length of benefits, forcing some unemployed workers to turn to SA (Cooke, 2009). Remarkably the interaction between these two programs has been an under researched area (Barrett et al., 1999; Human Resources Development Canada, 2001). This lack of “even basic information” (Barrett et al., 1999, p. 9) has resulted in ambiguous and seemingly conflicting results.

Through its Employment Assistance Program in 2000, OW introduced a new funding model providing financial incentives to local agents to move their clients to employment, allowing potential SA participants to collect EI during subsequent unemployment spells rather than SA. As a result, the SA rolls could potentially decrease in times of unemployment as this population would be in receipt of EI not SA. This possibility appears consistent with Barrett,
Doiron, Green and Riddell (1996) who found that there is a large overlap in the clientele of EI/UI and SA; a large proportion of SA participants also participated in the UI program in the same year and the authors did not find a characteristically different pattern between the two groups.

Moreover, Barrett and colleagues (1999), who having examined the interaction of SA and UI, suggested that a key objective of provincial governments in the implementation of ‘job creation’ programs was to transfer potential SA participants onto UI, thereby transferring the financial burden of responsibility from the provinces to the federal government. SA benefits became conditional on participation in rigorous job searches and/or training, many times forcing individuals to take the first available job (Cooke, 2009; Gorlick & Brethour, 1998). Herd, Mitchell and Lightman (2005a), for example, describe the micro-regulation of job search and personal behaviour to ensure the deterrence of SA access. Over the past decade the program has proactively limited entry and denied benefits through burdensome requests for information and complex application processes (Kneebone & White, 2009). At the same time, the activities aimed at coercing individuals to engage in the labour market have been ineffective. Klassen and Buchanan (2006) found that mandatory work placements were rare, although most participants were enlisted in some form of job-search program, many times little more than an orientation course. Quaid (2002) estimates that only 2 percent of eligible SA participants actually engaged in work placements (as cited in Klassen & Buchanan, 2006).

In Grey’s (2002) model, the author observes a long period elapsed between the moment individuals were separated from employment and the moment they claimed SA, suggesting a longer term transition is more consistent with the presence of significant numbers of employment constrained individuals in his study. Consequently individuals facing employment barriers may not appear as SA clients until after some time has passed. There is likely a significant time lag between increases in the unemployment rate to the time individuals have applied and then maximized their EI benefits, to the time they begin the SA application process and start to collect benefits. Future studies adopting a multi-modeling approach are recommended in order disentangle the individual characteristics of SA usage from those operating at the structural level, including how labour market dynamics (including their lagged effects) come to bear upon SA access.
6.14 Accommodation Trends

In terms of accommodation, OW participants are found in a variety of accommodation categories. Table 5A.13 portrays the variety of accommodation types in November 2009. In 95 percent of OW cases, participants rented accommodation with singles without children forming the predominant family structure type renting in that category. Boarding was the next most common accommodation category, followed by owners of accommodation. These numbers appear consistent with the eligibility requirement that applicants have exhausted all other sources of revenue prior to entering SA. Participants are not obliged to sell their homes (of principal residence) to participate in the program although they are limited to the amount of assets they are able to retain; for a single person: $585; couples without children: $1 010; couples with children: $1 694 (and $500 for each additional dependent); and sole support parents: $1 619 ($500 for each additional dependent) (City of Toronto, 2009).

What is important to note is that only a 0.7 percent of the caseload represents the transient/homeless group on OW in November 2009. Without a fixed address it is difficult to track these individuals; leading to momentous barriers in the acquisition of SA benefits for this population. The cases documented here are strictly those on OW and do not include those accessing the Ontario Disability Support Program or other income assistance programs to which homeless groups may be in receipt. However, as demonstrated here conceptualizations of SA participants as homeless or transient (shifty or unstable) are entirely unfounded. Further research in this area is recommended in order to tease out the nuances of accommodation on SA receipt.

6.15 Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Participation

Table 5A.14 revealed that a total of 3 936 individuals participated in the LEAP program in September 2009; 1 151 mandatorily and 2 674 voluntarily. As would be expected, females formed the overwhelming majority of participants, with only a handful of males participating. The social construction of the irresponsible teen so intensely fostered in the United States does not appear to be an issue in Ontario. The LEAP population accounted overall for a meager 2 percent of the total caseload in November 2009.
6.16  

Addiction Services Involvement

In 2001, mandatory drug testing was introduced as part of the Ontario Works agenda. The Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, a program of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, outlines their concerns with the mandatory drug testing proposal in the quote below:

…(W)riting to express concern regarding the proposal for mandatory drug testing and treatment of individuals who are in the “Ontario Works” program. These concerns include tying a person’s income to their co-operation with mandatory drug testing and to their agreement to engage in treatment in order to continue to be eligible for financial assistance. The two should not be linked. The intrusiveness of the testing raises concern as does the arbitrary testing being imposed on one class of people. Addiction is only one barrier to employment and affects only a small percentage of the “Ontario Works” population. The barriers to employment that we have identified have a far greater impact on “Ontario Works” clients and perhaps the Ministry of Community and Social Services should focus their energy and resources on addressing these instead (Kehyayan, 2000).

What should be highlighted here is that addiction “affects only a small percentage of the ‘Ontario Works’ population” (Kehyayan, 2000). As the number of addicts on OW did not appear to drive this policy decision, other ideological considerations obviously were at play. Invariably the proposal resonates with the social construction of individuals in need of assistance as addicts who ‘use’ the system. The proposal to test all OW participants was scaled back as mass complaints were launched and the Human Rights Commission indicated that drug testing Ontario Works participants was discriminatory; not so much because of its inherent intrusiveness but because of the classification of addiction as a disability (CBC News, 2001)\(^4\). As a result,

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\(^4\)  Many appeals have been made to the Social Benefits Tribunal to challenge section 5(2) of the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (1997) on the grounds that it violates the Human Rights Code under what is commonly referred to as the addiction exclusion provision (persons are not eligible for ODSP if an addiction to drugs or alcohol is the only cause of a substantial restriction to their activities of daily living). In September 2010, the Ontario Court of Justice upheld an earlier decision that people with addictions (as the only disabling condition) should be eligible for ODSP benefits. The government did not file an appeal and the deadline to appeal the decision has now expired, thus, the decision in now law (Income Insecurity Advocacy Centre, 2010).
according to the Welfare to Work Phase 2 Provincial and Territorial Updates (2001), OW administrators will

...(E)nsure that Ontario Works participants who are unable to find or keep employment because of an addiction to illicit drugs, alcohol or prescription drugs are connected to treatment, a program of mandatory addiction treatment is being introduced. Participants will be referred to an assessment test only if there is reason to believe their addiction is posing a barrier to employment. Participants who can not find or keep employment because of an addiction will be expected to go for treatment that is supported by an individualized service plan which will provide the support they and their families need while in recovery (Ministry of Community & Social Services, 2002).

Today the Addiction Services Initiative (ASI) governed by Ontario Works Policy Directive 8.4, outlines when participants may be referred for a drug test:

Where a delivery agent has been approved to deliver the ASI, Administrators may require participants to engage in screening, assessment and/or treatment for substance abuse that is a barrier to participation or employment… Participants may be referred for a screening test for substance abuse when there are reasonable grounds to believe that their repeated substance abuse may be or may become a barrier to participation in employment (Ministry of Community & Social Services, 2010).

A total of 2 560 people were involved in addiction services in November 2009, accounting for 1 percent of the total caseload for that month. This number accounts for those participants who have been referred to services for addictions and obviously does not consider those who have addictions that have not been recognized. Nevertheless, the dearth of individuals in the caseload identified as necessitating this assistance should make one question the imperative behind drug testing and the underlying construction of SA participants as ‘addicts’ abusing the system. Notwithstanding, the fact that people—even if only a handful—may be struggling with such issues ought to draw attention to the inherent root issues underlying addictions rather than blaming individuals for their problems.
This chapter challenges numerous social constructions regarding SA participants in the scholarship today, drawing attention to the study findings which cast doubt on the discourses which position lone mothers as ineffective or substandard citizens. The focus of society to depict lone mothers as the sole cause for concern in SA access is inaccurate, the group older lone males without children is now near parity with the lone mother group—not that any group should be singled out for needing assistance, but if they are (as inevitably they will be), the reasons why a given group is particularly vulnerable ought to be critically investigated. Constructions surrounding immigrant receipt of SA must also be challenged. The significant barriers to employment for this population are now well documented; however, seldom do people question why immigrants are so readily scapegoated for welfare access. What compels society to continuously reproduce discourses that would blame individuals in need rather than attempting to create the necessary conditions that would allow all groups equal access to financial security? Furthermore, the ‘teen-out-of-wedlock’ phenomenon so feared in the United States does not at all appear to be an issue within this study’s context, with only a fraction (2 percent) of the caseload involved in the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program in November 2009. The representation of the SA population as ‘addicts’ is also dubious given the small proportion of individuals (1 percent) referred to addiction services within that month. The drive for mandatory drug testing is exposed as more of an ideological imperative, not based on a higher prevalence of this population toward drug addiction than the general population. Hence the myriad social constructions which paint the picture of SA participants as lazy, defective and devious are problematic and require critical inspection. Clearly these constructions fit a policy frame which stigmatizes groups in order to generate such shame that SA access will be avoided at all costs; the objectives of the British Poor Laws (Fraser & Gordon, 2002; Piven & Cloward, 1971) served the same purpose. Events such as the global economic recession play a crucial role in intensifying SA usage; sadly however the structural barriers impeding people’s ability to stay afloat rarely receive the same attention as research which casts blame for individual failings.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

The Marshallian understanding of the social rights of citizenship premised on a homogeneous, British population is important in understanding the historical evolution of the welfare state, but ultimately falls short in informing current neoliberal realities. The classical liberal framework’s male breadwinner model situated on a division of labour dichotomized in private/public spheres is clearly problematic for contemporary society. Rising to the fore in its place is neoliberalism, fixating on paid labour to mark the ideal citizen while progressively eroding social rights vital to individuals in this pursuit. Accordingly the dissertation adopts the term post-welfare state (as opposed to welfare state) to recognize the evolution of neoliberalism in defining citizenship and how the rights, responsibilities and entitlements of citizenship are apportioned. The literature is now burgeoning with research that would more accurately depict the neoliberal post-welfare state (as presented in the provisioning literature), albeit there is room for further scholarship in this area. One arena greatly needing forward-thinking inquiry is in the analysis of lone mothers’ fit within the neoliberal paradigm. The extant literature centred on welfare dependency noticeably stigmatizes and scapegoats lone mothers; blaming them for being in need of assistance while stripping away the supports which would foster their economic security.

As is demonstrated in the dissertation, the construction of welfare dependency is imbued with numerous connotations and depictions, none of them valorizing of the ‘welfare recipient’. Even the term recipient is defined as one who ‘receives’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2010)—not one who ‘gives’, produces or contributes for the benefit of society. SA participants have continuously engaged in, although intermittently (O’Connor, 2000), even the strictest sense of economic production—work defined as waged labour. Be that as it may, SA receipt is commonly associated with dependency, even while most spells are short lived and episodic in the life course, not chronic or long term. Breitkreuz (2005) emphasizes how dependence is usually typified as a condition or state from which an individual must be moved (i.e. a child who is dependent matures into dependence). This conceptualization of dependency implicitly blames
individuals for failings at work in the market economy via the individualization of poverty, allowing the state (and society as a whole) to relinquish its responsibility to alleviate economic hardship in society. Unequivocally, self-sufficiency is the model neoliberal states have raised as the standard for venerable citizens. However, the notion of self-sufficiency is undefined in policy, and therefore, its assumed meaning connotes the ability to provide for oneself without outside assistance (Gove, p. 2061, as cited in Breitkreuz, 2005). Nelson (2002) notes that poverty and dependence have been equated as one and the same, ultimately revealing that character flaws are bred through the SA system. “The causal analysis suggested that a reliance on social welfare led to dysfunctional subcultures (replete with fatherless families) that, in turn, engendered inadequate personality traits that, to complete the cycle, resulted in further reliance on social welfare” (Nelson, 2002, p. 583).

The justification ideology (a stigmatizing discourse) serving the public policy domain of welfare distribution is the notion of ‘personal responsibility’ (unequivocally labeled such within the American Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act) and the insistence that assistance only be allocated to individuals when they are not perceived as needy or ‘dependent’ on the state. While individuals routinely balance numerous ‘personal’ responsibilities, these remain invisible as the spotlight maintains its focus on the decisive responsibility of maintaining one’s position outside the welfare system. The dissertation provides numerous examples conveying the need for lone mothers to disentangle themselves from the SA system, while mainstream literature remains transfixed on discussions about the generosity of SA in enlarging the caseload, the intergenerational propensity of SA access (feeblemindedness carried over to future generations), the welfare trap for teenage parents—research which does little to address systemic inequalities. What is glaringly apparent is the paucity of literature examining the structural forces which influence SA usage.

The conception of the ‘self-made man’ reverberates from the ‘personal responsibility’, ‘independence’ and ‘self-sufficiency’ jargon; even though such a ‘man’ (the term is gendered) is completely untenable in practice given the interdependency and interconnectedness of individuals. Social capital, as we have seen, is built on a complex matrix of social connections which have the capacity to propel or hinder individuals from ‘getting ahead’. Independence can
never be achieved—while one individual is getting ahead economically through waged labour, someone else must be overseeing the work in the household. At the same time, ‘self-sufficiency’ does not value the (provisioning) activities which sustain individuals within families, neighbourhoods and communities, even though this work is fundamental for closer approximations of ‘self-sufficiency’ (however defined) to be achieved.

Within racist (Nelson, 2002) and sexist profiles, SA participants are cast as ‘dependent’, pathological and deviant. The tensions surrounding motherhood, what it means to be a good mother/bad mother are also at play in this discussion. The good/bad dichotomy has long been postulated, as if mothers could fit on one side or another of a normatively construed divide. Good mothers are heralded for their moral superiority while bad mothers are positioned as deviant or unfit parents. This positioning is aggravated when a mother does not invoke or conform to the current normative standard. Swift (1995) notes how the construction of the bad mother is commonly associated with poverty and neediness. Moreover the descriptors oft used in the child neglect discourse include ‘‘needy’, ‘immature,’ emotionally immature’, and ‘dependent’’ (Swift, 1995, p. 111, emphasis added). Assuming that young teen moms are bad mothers (indeed many point to the huge blunder of these ‘girls’ becoming pregnant to begin with), participants in the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program (modeled after Ohio Works First, piloted in mid-1989 [MDRC, 2010]) are obligated to attend 35 hours of parenting classes (Smith-Carrier, 2010). The assumption remains that poor, young mothers are unfit and require instruction on how to effectively parent their children.

It is at this juncture where poverty and illegitimacy are intertwined. Perceptions of good/bad mothers are historically and culturally specific, even as we learned from Fraser and Gordon’s (1994) discussion of dependency as being right and appropriate at one time during the pre-industrial age, and later constructed as being flawed and defective in the post-industrial era. At different times and in different cultures, having children young is considered optimal for childbirth. In present neoliberal society however having children during adolescence situates the mother in a stigmatized and marginalized status—oft linked to welfare dependency (Wilson & Huntington, 2005).
Understandings of dependency, depicting women, and lone mothers in particular, as defective and inferior must therefore be interrogated. Recognized as a conception that changes within disparate social, cultural and historical contexts, dependency must be discarded as a term to define social assistance ‘recipients’ over the life course. Rather than pointing to the individual failings of substandard citizens who ‘unacceptably’ access income assistance programs, the structures and systemic barriers which position some groups for poverty and marginalization must be underscored. Portraying lone mothers as inadequate does little to improve the policies and processes which adversely affect them; setting them up for cyclical patterns of SA receipt interspersed between bouts of low waged employment—both of which maintain their position in poverty.

A good starting place (Power, 2004) is offered in the provisioning literature, providing the language needed to discuss women’s experiences (Baker Collins et al., 2009; DeVault, 1991) and the work they regularly engage in, permeating both formal and informal economic spheres. Such conventional understandings of paid/unpaid, formal/informal binaries fail to address the costs bourne by women when social supports once offered publicly are transferred to the arena of private provisioning (Baker Collins et al., 2009; Beneria, 1995; Donath, 2000). Staeheli and Clarke (2003) thus claim that social rights no longer enable citizen participation, but ensure that citizens participate in order to reclaim such rights or work to compensate for their absence. As a consequence, the community becomes the site for achieving social welfare. While the state has progressively cast off its role in supplying social programs/services (typically considered the social rights of citizenship) to support individuals and families (Staeheli, 2003), women have increasingly been positioned to take on much of the work i.e. caring labour, work in communities, advocating for resources, etc. However this work is not attached to financial compensation and generally goes unrecognized (Donath, 2000). One detrimental effect of this transfer of responsibility is a risky public policy framework which endangers women and those for whom they are responsible, while scrutinizing their individual choices (Baker Collins et al., 2009). This policy framework is most visible in the welfare system, where income assistance programs have been slashed, rigid eligiblilty and the imperative of work for welfare imposed, while surveillance mechanisms have been erected to monitor SA participants and their access to the system (Herd, Mitchell & Lightman, 2005).
The provisioning literature thus provides a useful juncture for understanding how the varied contributions of women can be more accurately portrayed to combat the structural inequalities which repeatedly locate them at the ‘undeserving’ end of the continuum. Women in low income households employ a range of strategies to collectively provision to make ends meet; often accessing myriad agencies and sources simultaneously to support their families (Baker Collins et al., 2009). The old cliché ‘time is money’ is of note as these activities require much time—time spent in developing relationships, acquiring information, accessing resources and working in communities—all of which are necessary to get by but do not yield significant financial profit.

Women continue to shoulder the larger proportion of household work in comparison to men (Beaujot & Liu, 2005; Geist, 2005), contributing to a double burden of responsibility—responsibilities to engage fully in both paid and unpaid labour. Geist (2005) notes the resilience of the traditional arrangement whereby women continue to carry caring and household work even while their labour market participation has markedly increased. However as provisioning theorists assert, the unpaid work of women consistently is devalued and is generally not captured in most economic analyses. What makes empirical analysis capturing the depth and breadth of the work of women so complex is that women’s provisioning activities flow across relationships of responsibility, some reciprocal in nature, others one way (Baker Collins et al., 2009); crossing traditional boundaries of private/public domain. As such there is debate as to which approaches would most accurately capture the multidimensionality of this work, as well as the merits of different strategies for imputing its value (Neysmith et al., 2010).

Other literature bases which have attempted to capture the investment in relationships which would further one’s economic position, the social capital literature for example, do not serve to promote the status of women and the work they continually engage in. There exist multifarious definitions and measurements of what social capital entails, yielding a concept lacking theoretical clarity and analytic potency. Even social capital theorist de Souza Briggs (2004) suggests social capital may not be a practical concept. Unmistakably the literature overlooks the differential access to social capital for women vis-à-vis men, or the disparities resulting from various intersections of difference (Bezanson, 2006a). Women’s immense
commitments in the home have hindered their ability to accumulate and maintain social capital—a notion ignored in the social capital literature.

Typically oversimplified and largely discounted aspects of how social capital is acquired are presented in the literature: which networks are significant for economic gain—poor individuals may engage with a host of different networks, although these may not be helpful in producing significant financial outcomes (de Souza Briggs, 2004); who does what kind of work (Graefe, 2004); as well as the important work of caring labour and the informal networks established by women is neglected (Bezanson, 2006a; Herd & Harrington-Meyer, 2002). Not surprisingly then the concept holds significant appeal for neoliberal states which call for social engagement while ignoring structural inequalities. The demand for heightened active citizenship participation relieves the state from providing public social services, relying instead on the work of women in communities. Consequently social capital has translated into an employability model for welfare states, publicizing that SA participants must engage in paid labour while not providing the public provisions (e.g. child care) that would engender this work (Punrandare, 2005).

Similarly, the social exclusion/inclusion literature has been adopted by post-welfare states seeking to command performance in paid labour as a requisite precondition to be ‘socially included’ in society. The socially excluded are defined as those not endorsing neoliberal principles, i.e. the unemployed, the ‘welfare dependent’, criminals, the poor, the homeless, etc. those who do not present the virtues of the neoliberal idealized citizen. In such a model access to employment is purportedly accessible to all. Measured by quantifiable outcomes such as homelessness, unemployment and poverty, the yardstick of social exclusion categorizes kinds of individuals noted to be flawed, deviant, and consequently to be blamed for their own exclusion in society (Good-Gingrich, 2003). However the literature falls short in its attention to the institutions which reproduce exclusionary processes (Shakir, 2005). The social exclusion/inclusion scholarship is thus enmeshed in neoliberal values and ideology which adopt traditional poverty analyses (Barry, 1998), studies on the ‘underclass’ (Beall, 2002) and welfare dependency (Fraser & Gordon, 1994)—research which homogenizes and stigmatizes populations (Good-Gingrich, 2003). Why social inequalities are reproduced is not interrogated, nor is the
attention given to how public policy perpetuates the exclusion of particular groups in society. Consequently the literature is indispensable for maintaining the status quo (Good-Gingrich, 2008).

While the new social movements’ literature effectively demonstrates that women’s engagement in community activism is a useful site to witness valuable contributions to citizenship, this engagement has its shortcomings, presenting paradoxical and conflicting effects for women. On one hand, women in this literature have been lauded the ‘mothers of the nation’ (as demonstrated in Latin American countries), valorized for their contributions to grassroots activities. On the other hand, the reliance on women’s survival strategies has also allowed the state to jettison its commitment to public provisioning. The new social movements’ literature therefore highlights the leadership, shared consciousness and empowerment presented to women engaged in community activism, at the same time presenting a double-edged sword—these leadership activities also absolve the state from its role in welfare distribution. Governments have thus increasingly abdicated their role in responding to economic crises, depending on women to step in to provide for their families and communities (Whittier, 2002).

Again, the effects of neoliberalism, exacerbated by structural adjustment policies in Latin American countries, have firmly implanted the notion that families must ‘absorb’ the effects of restructuring, while fundamentally disregarding the disproportionate amount of work women carry to sustain their communities. Beneria (1992) documents how households have increasingly turned to family members to provide resources, avoiding assistance from the state, agencies or even informal networks for help. As such governments in Latin America have institutionalized the work of women as a viable development strategy (Lind, 2005). At times women draw upon their traditional roles of mothers to successfully thwart the detrimental consequences of neoliberal restructuring, at other times, traversing gender roles they engage in leadership activities in the (male oriented) public realm. Frequently though these activities compel women to reinforce the traditional role of mother to generate support for the cause, gain traction with other women and maintain legitimacy by the state (Lind, 2005). Consequently the new social movements’ literature presents mixed results for women. We see clearly the important work conducted by women in their families, communities and neighbourhoods; work which is valued
and recognized. However this very work results in decreased support and public provision by
governments, only adding to women’s already massive workload. The strategic use of gender
roles to generate support for activist efforts is also laudable. Again though, this work often serves
to reinforce the conventional division of labour and private/public divide—a division of labour
which inevitably disadvantages women.

The dissertation examines a number of different literature bases salient to understanding
SA access today. Many of them have been shown to be incongruous or limited in accurately
representing the contributions of lone mothers in particular and women in general. The new
social movements’ literature was found to have mixed consequences for women, while the
scholarship on social capital and social exclusion/inclusion resounded of neoliberal principles;
principles which blame lone mothers for needing assistance, presenting them as deficient citizens
while maintaining the structures which perpetuate their marginalization. This study presents a
counter paradigm which recognizes and values the work of women in their unconventional,
creative (i.e. discovering ways to stretch resources) and oft ignored (i.e. negated in the
citizenship literature) forms of engagement and provisioning—not to mention the conventional,
habitual and monotonous provisioning they ceaselessly engage in. Instead of regarding women
as deficient citizens, provisioning effectively reframes the contributions of women and the host
of relationships and activities they sustain. SA participants adopt a range of strategies to resist
the neoliberal processes which afflict them—one of these strategies being SA. Viewed in this
light, women are cast as strategic, even creative, in the ways they attempt to stay economically
afloat. The activities women regularly engage in within their families, neighbourhoods and
communities ought to be regarded as positive, effective demonstrations of citizenship. New
literature on citizenship must be advanced that would highlight the myriad contributions of
women, rather than stigmatize them for drawing on others for support. The provisioning
literature has been found to present one such conduit for recognizing and validating the
multifarious work of women.

The dissertation also presents a statistical model analyzing SA spells in Ontario, Canada.
The research provides an avenue to discuss study findings through a critical feminist lens,
recognizing the mainstream literature’s propensity to socially construct lone mothers as
fundamentally flawed and ineffective citizens. How study findings are interpreted remains key. While mainstream researchers have tended to centre their claims of an overly generous SA system (i.e. Lemieux & Milligan, 2004; Lindbeck, 1995; Moffitt, 1992, 2002) which serve to solidify disparaging and reproachful social constructions, many overlook the overall landscape of SA access by overlooking the key reasons why individuals are compelled on and off the system. This study reverses the trend by viewing the analysis through a critical feminist lens, focusing on the systemic issues impacting upon the SA population.

Returning to the research questions posed at the outset of the study:

(1) Does the operationalization of welfare dependency (long term receipt) descriptively reflect the current ‘reality’ of the OW caseload? What is the demographic composition of the caseload—do lone mothers comprise the largest SA population in Ontario? What different social locations are presented by participants? What does this information indicate about how participants are socially constructed within the welfare dependency paradigm? (2) What does the statistical analysis indicate about SA spells for lone mothers vis-à-vis participants from other family structure types? For men and women or for immigrants vis-à-vis Canadian born participants? Do these data support existing social constructions of SA participants?

While the research documented here would suggest that SA spells are short lived, the question is quite subjective—how does one define long or short term SA receipt? Similar to Barrett and Cragg’s (1998) study in British Columbia, the notion that the majority of participants remain on OW for significant chunks of time (i.e. successive years or decades) is questionable. Moreover, while the caseload continues to present higher numbers of women on SA relative to men, the lone male without children population is growing. Advancing the notion that lone mothers are the only significant population accessing SA is therefore also problematic, suggesting that moral judgments and ideological considerations are most likely at play.

Undertaking this study, I did not expect to find evidence that would contradict prior Canadian studies; research that indicates that lone mothers are a significant population on SA, that immigrants have slower exit rates compared to Canadian born participants (although this finding is not consistent) or that having children decreases one’s odds of leaving SA. Rather, the
aim of the study was to challenge the welfare dependency paradigm—and the social constructions attached to it. The interpretation of the findings thus presented a significant opening for discussing how disparaging social constructions around SA receipt are reproduced and get taken up by academics, governments, the media and SA participants.

7.1 Avenues for Future Research

There are a number of areas in which this research agenda can be advanced. Further research is needed on the intricacies of the labour market and how economic forces such as the minimum wage, the employment and unemployment rate, the employment insurance system, inflation, employment estimates by occupation and industry, wages and poverty levels impact upon SA access. Some of these were identified in the discussion. These variables are dense with multiple interactions and should be modeled separately from variables at the individual level. Consequently more refined and nuanced measures are needed to more accurately observe their independent effects. In addition, work is needed to empirically assess and theoretically capture the non paid and caring labour that women repetitively engage in; work that is persistent and necessary, albeit not quantified in most econometric models. And finally, data are needed on immigration status and race/ethnicity; information vital in determining the participation levels of different groups on SA and the specific barriers confronting these populations.

What is particularly important in the development of sound SA policy is information on who SA participants are and the circumstances surrounding their receipt—information engendered through access to comprehensive data. The MCSS only collects data that is pertinent to the issuance of SA benefits and does not gather information not deemed vital to this endeavour. Researchers therefore do not have the means to ascertain who SA participants are in terms of specific social locations (i.e. ethnicity/race, complete information on immigration status, mental health, ability, etc.); data that would be helpful in generating policy changes that take into account these important intersections. That being said, having greater access to data will not in itself challenge negative stereotypes. What is more important are research questions that better inform our understanding of them. Identifying and challenging the discourses that underlie SA participation is critical. Without such recognition, the judgments that surround SA receipt can continue unchecked. Primed with a critical awareness of the discourses shaping welfare today,
the social constructions damaging SA participants can more readily be contested, and transformed.

7.2 Concluding Thoughts

Regrettably, theorists have had the proclivity to focus their claims around androcentric notions of citizenship (Jaggar, 2005; Jones, 1990; Lister, 2003) rather than recognizing that citizenship holds different meanings for women and men. The exclusion of women (and more specifically, women of colour) from the discourse of citizenship has traditionally been purposeful and deliberate (Lister, 2003) as the interests and agenda of men are preserved in a theoretical framework of male citizen. Key to this framework is the public/private binary which does not view acts in the private sphere as activities worthy of valid citizenship. Hence, “the rearticulation of this public-private divide thus provides one of the keys to challenging women’s exclusion at the level of both theory and praxis” (Lister, 2003, p. 197). A new conceptualization of citizenship must value and recognize the contributions of women’s provisioning activities, for in actual fact, these responsibilities were once privileges allocated to citizens via social rights of the welfare state.

Citizenship must be understood within places and spaces (Lister, 2003); invited, and invented spaces (Miraftab, 2006), formal and informal realms of community activism, as well as within familial structures. Miraftab (2006) maintains that as long as grassroots activism is confined within a defined or invited space it may be tolerated as it poses no immediate threat to the present structure. The author therefore points out that restricting the recognition of citizenship as activities taken within invited spaces represents yet another state-centered position. “For just as liberal views assigned the citizenship-granting agency to the state, the neoliberal view assigns the state the agency to grant status as civil society as well, and to define the spaces where citizenship can be practiced” (Miraftab, 2006, p. 211). By fully valuing the actions taken in invented spaces and recognizing them as valid citizenship activities, the state’s capacity to define citizenship is diminished.

The validation of women’s citizenship is central in countering the disrespect many have experienced as a result of the processes which stigmatize them because they live in poverty.
(Lister, 2007). The provisioning literature offers a useful starting place (Power, 2004) for countering this trend; furthering current understandings on the multidimensionality of women’s work—work which permeates formal/informal, paid/unpaid, public/private boundaries. Rather than scrutinizing women’s choices for seeking assistance from others (and the state), provisioning theorists recognize the resourceful and creative strategies women employ to provision for those for whom they have relationships of responsibility, while at the same time thwarting the neoliberal policy effects which recurrently stigmatize them—policies which unremittingly position them for poverty and marginalization.

By elevating new ways of recognizing lone mothers (and other marginalized groups) apart from the socially constructed excluded and ‘Otherized’ citizens presented in the mainstream literature, a better understanding of women as effective and valued citizens can emerge. However unless we are aware of how society continually (re)invents groups to blame and exclude in society, a new model of citizenship, no matter how valorizing, will do little to debunk or expunge the thinking around lone mothers as defective. To answer Good-Gingrich’s (2003) question of what lies in the ‘centre’ of social inclusion to which the excluded are to be inserted, is the heart of true social exclusion; the perpetual re-creation of an ‘Other’ ‘kind’ of inadequate citizen. The ‘answer’ may have less to do with the groups excluded in society, but rather with society itself.
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APPENDIX 1

Social Constructions in the Media

The media above were discovered in an Internet search using the terms ‘welfare’ and ‘social assistance’ conducted on January 3, 2011.

5 The media above were discovered in an Internet search using the terms ‘welfare’ and ‘social assistance’ conducted on January 3, 2011.
APPENDIX 2

List of Covariates Used in the Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>Variable type and unit of measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate - male (0), female (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child count</td>
<td>Time-dependent; continuous / recoded into dummy covariates (child1 = one child; child2 = two or more children; no children is the reference category)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Time-dependent; continuous – year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>Time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (edu1 = elementary, Grades 1-8; edu2 = secondary, Grades 9-13; edu3 = post secondary; no education is the reference category)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revised model:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariates (edu1 = elementary and secondary, Grades 1-13; edu2 = post secondary; no education is the reference category)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>Time-constant; dichotomous recoded into dummy covariate - Canadian born (0), foreign born (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure</td>
<td>Time-dependent; categorical recoded into dummy covariates (couples without children is the reference category; family1 = couples with one child; family2 = couples with two children; family3 = couples with three or more children; family4 = singles without children; family5 = singles with one child; family6 = singles with two children; family7 = singles with three or more children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revised model:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(couples without children is the reference category; family1 = couples with one child; family2 = couples with two or more children; family3 = singles without children; family4 =</td>
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<td></td>
<td>= singles with one child; family5 = singles with two or more children)</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Time-dependent; recoded into dummy covariate (single = 0; married = 1)</td>
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### APPENDIX 3

**Sponsored Immigrants and Refugees in November 2009**

<table>
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<td>2</td>
<td>23,233</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* There were categories for ‘no status’ and ‘student visa’ but these were removed from the table as there were no participants in these categories.
APPENDIX 4

Bar Graph of Accommodation Types in November 2009
Copyright Acknowledgements

The views and opinions expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.